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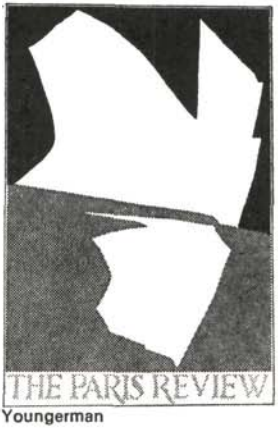

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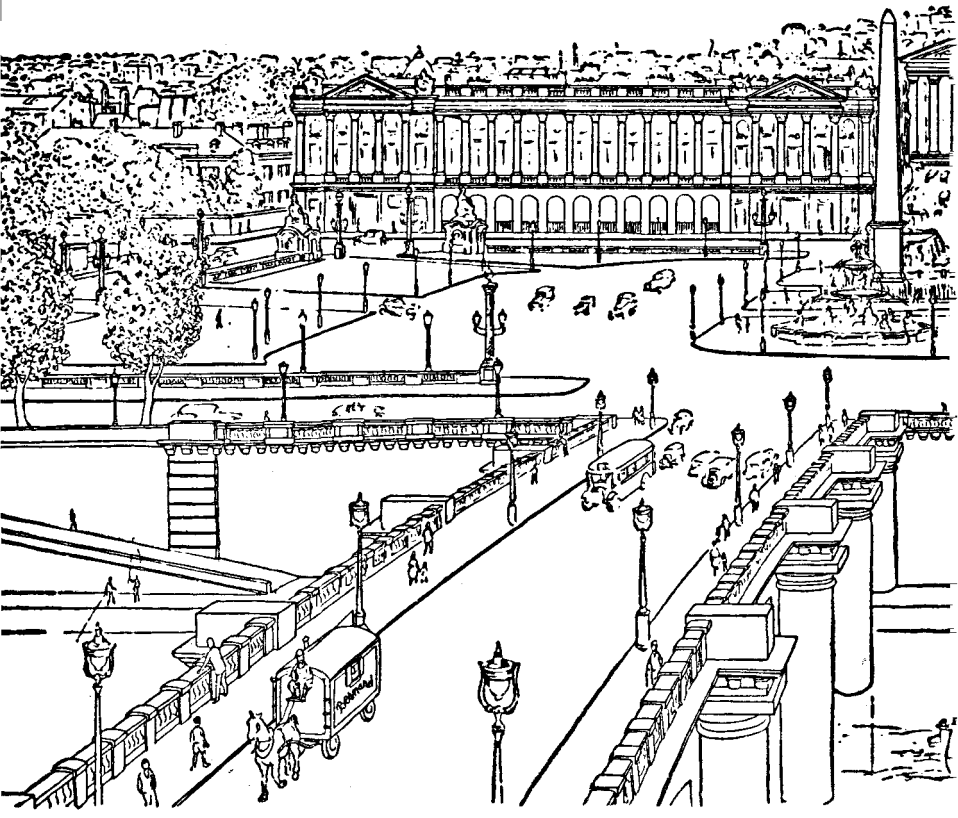

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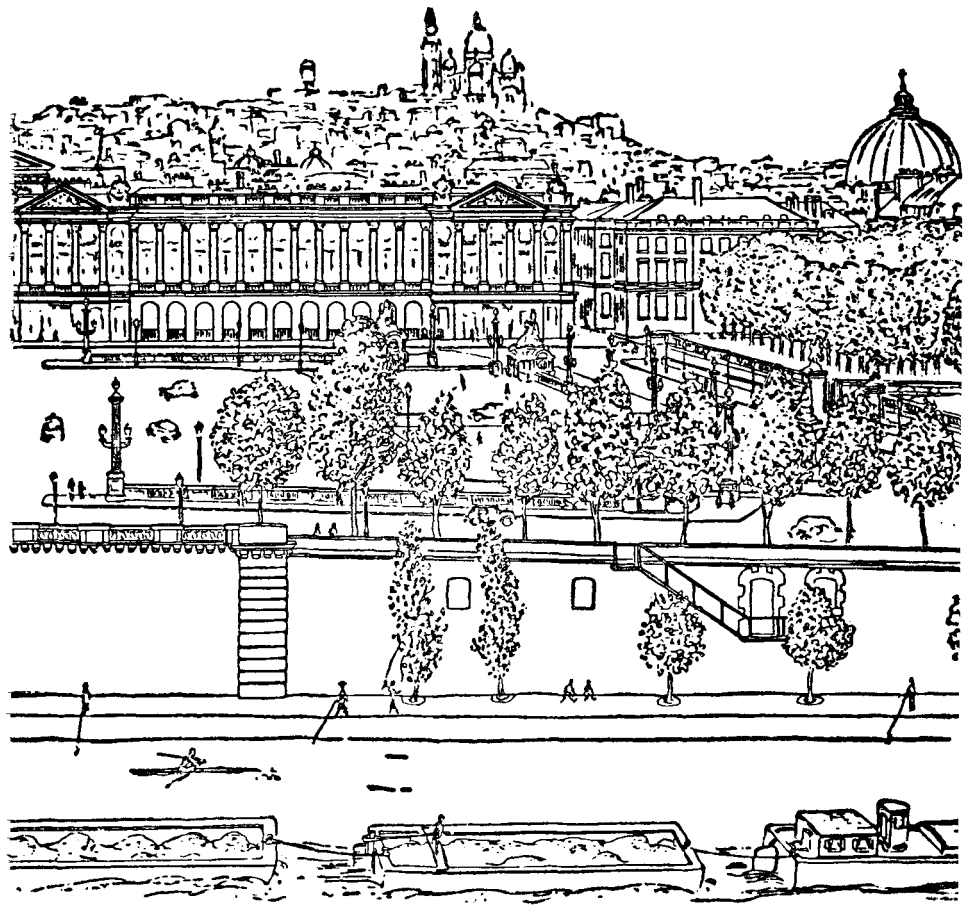

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Frank O'Hara

Memorial Day 1950

Picasso made me tough and quick, and the world;
just as in a minute plane trees are knocked down
outside my window by a crew of creators.
Once he got his axe going everyone was upset
enough to fight for the last ditch and heap
of rubbish.
Through all that surgery I thought
I had a lot to say, and named several last things
Gertrude Stein hadn't had time for; but then
the war was over, those things had survived
and even when you're scared art is no dictionary.
Max Ernst told us that.
How many trees and frying pans
I loved and lost! Guernica hollered look out!
but we were all busy hoping our eyes were talking
to Paul Klee. My mother and father asked me and
I told them from my tight blue pants we should
love only the stones, the sea, and heroic figures.
Wasted child! I'll club you on the shins! I
wasn't surprised when the older people entered
my cheap hotel room and broke my guitar and my can
of blue paint.
At that time all of us began to think
with our bare hands and even with blood all over
them, we knew vertical from horizontal, we never
smeared anything except to find out how it lived.
Fathers of Dada! You carried shining erector sets
in your rough bony pockets, you were generous
and they were lovely as chewing gum or flowers!
Thank you!

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And those of us who thought poetry
was crap were throttled by Auden or Rimbaud
when, sent by some compulsive Juno, we tried
to play with collages or sprechstimme in their bed.
Poetry didn't tell me not to play with toys
but alone I could never have figured out that dolls
meant death.

Our responsibilities did not begin
in dreams, though they began in bed. Love is first of all
a lesson in utility. I hear the sewage singing
underneath my bright white toilet seat and know
that somewhere sometime it will reach the sea:
gulls and swordfishes will find it richer than a river.
And airplanes are perfect mobiles, independent
of the breeze; crashing in flames they show us how
to be prodigal. O Boris Pasternak, it may be silly
to call to you, so tall in the Urals, but your voice
cleans our world, clearer to us than the hospital:
you sound above the factory's ambitious gargle.
Poetry is as useful as a machine!

Look at my room.
Guitar strings hold up pictures. I don't need
a piano to sing, and naming things is only the intention
to make things. A locomotive is more melodious
than a cello. I dress in oil cloth and read music
by Guillaume Apollinaire's clay candelabra. Now
my father is dead and has found out you must look things
in the belly, not in the eye. If only he had listened
to the men who made us, hollering like stuck pigs!

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Song

I am stuck in traffic in a taxicab
which is typical
and not just of modern life

mud clambers up the trellis of my nerves
must lovers of Eros end up with Venus
muss es sein? es muss nicht sein, I tell you

how I hate disease, it's like worrying
that comes true
and it simply must not be able to happen

in a world where you are possible
my love
nothing can go wrong for us, tell me

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Heroic Sculpture

We join the animals
not when we fuck
        or shit
not when tears fall

but when
        staring into light
        we think

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F. (Missive & Walk) I. 53

I'm getting tired of not wearing underwear
and then again I like it
strolling along
feeling the wind blow softly on my genitals
though I also like them encased in something
firm, almost tight, like a projectile
at
a streetcorner I stop and a lamppost is
bending over the traffic pensively like a
praying mantis, not lighting anything,
just looking
who dropped that empty carton
of cracker jacks I wonder I find the favor
that's a good sign
it's the blue everyone
is talking about an enormous cloud which hides
the observatory blimp when you
ride on a 5th Avenue bus you hide on a 5th
Avenue bus I mean compared to you walking
don't hide there you are trying
to hide behind a fire hydrant I'm
not going to the Coliseum I'm going to
the Russian Tea Room fooled you didn't I
well it is nicer in the Park
with the pond and all that okay
lake and bicyclists give you
a feeling of being at leisure in the open
air lazy and good-tempered which is
fairly unusual these days I liked
for instance carrying my old Gautier book
and *L'Ombra* over to Leroi's the other
pale afternoon through the clouds of 3rd
Avenue and the ambulance and the drunk

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Love

A whispering far away
heard by the poet in a bower
of flesh his limbs stir

is it sadness or the perfection
of eyes that clutches him?

And a parade of lamenting
draws near a wave of angels
he is drowning in the word

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After Wyatt

The night paints inhaling smoke and semen.
  The frail face pulses like a parachute,
  corridors of shakes melting from the boot
  of that surf north breathes bloody in simoon.
On the tide when the galleon is moved
  by the fatal dolor of mariners,
  a cry becomes whole night of war in us;
  I'm wrecked on what's no grunted green behoved
or truly sufferable. The white will
  and jealousy of death beside the sea
  crushes when not all dark and grievable
like the monster who specks the distance, leers,
  collapses, shouts "You can die even me,"
  roaring up, throttles whom he fed for years.

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As Planned

After the first glass of vodka
you can accept just about anything
of life even your own mysteriousness
you think it is nice that a box
of matches is purple and brown and is called
La Petite and comes from Sweden
for they are words that you know and that
is all you know words not their feelings
or what they mean and you write because
you know them not because you understand them
because you don't you are stupid and lazy
and will never be great but you do
what you know because what else is there?

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My Heart

I'm not going to cry all the time
nor shall I laugh all the time,
I don't prefer one "strain" to another.
I'd have the immediacy of a bad movie,
not just a sleeper, but also the big,
overproduced first-run kind. I want to be
at least as alive as the vulgar. And if
some aficionado of my mess says "That's
not like Frank!", all to the good! I
don't wear brown and grey suits all the time,
do I? No. I wear workshirts to the opera,
often. I want my feet to be bare,
I want my face to be shaven, and my heart—
you can't plan on the heart, but
the better part of it, my poetry, is open.

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Ode to Tanaquil Leclerc

Smiling through my own memories of painful excitement
your wide eyes stare
and narrow like a lost forest of childhood stolen from gypsies
two eyes that are the sunset of
two knees
two wrists
two minds
and the extended philosophical column, when they conducted the dialogues
in distant Athens, rests on your two ribbon-wrapped hearts, white
credibly agile
flashing
scimitars of a city-state

where in the innocence of my watching had those ribbons become entangled
dragging me upward into lilac-colored ozone where I gasped
and you continued to smile as you dropped the bloody scarf of my life
from way up there, my neck hurt

you were always changing into something else
and always will be
always plumage, perfection's broken heart, wings

and wide eyes in which everything you do
repeats itself simultaneously and simply
as a window "gives" on something

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it seems sometimes as if you were only breathing
and everything happened around you
because when you disappeared in the wings nothing was there
but the motion of some extraordinary happening I hadn't
understood
the superb arc of a question, of a decision about death

because you are beautiful you are hunted
and with the courage of a vase
you refuse to become a deer or tree
and the world holds its breath
to see if you are there, and safe

are you?

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The Cinema

James Salter

At ten-thirty then, she arrived. They were waiting. The door at the far end opened and somewhat shyly, trying to see in the dimness if anyone was there, her long hair hanging like a schoolgirl's, everyone watching, she slowly, almost reluctantly approached... Behind her came the young woman who was her secretary.

Great faces cannot be explained. She had a long nose, a mouth, a curious distance between the eyes. It was a face open and unknowable. It pronounced itself somehow indifferent to life.

When he was introduced to her, Guivi, the leading man, smiled. His teeth were large and there existed a space between the incisors. On his chin was a mole. These defects at that time were revered. He'd had only four or five roles, his discovery was sudden, the shot in which he appeared for the first time was often called one of the most memorable introductions in all of film. It was true. There is sometimes one image which outlasts everything, even the names are forgotten. He held her chair. She acknowledged the introductions faintly, one could hardly hear her voice.

The director leaned forward and began to talk. They would rehearse for ten days in this bare hall. Anna's face was buried in her collar as he spoke. The director was new to her. He was a small man known as a hard worker. The saliva flew from his mouth as he talked. She had never rehearsed a film before, not for Fellini, not for Chabrol. She was trying to

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listen to what he said. She felt strongly the presence of others around her. Guivi sat calmly, smoking a cigarette. She glanced at him unseen.

They began to read, sitting at the table together. Make no attempt to find meaning, Iles told them, not so soon, this was only the first step. There were no windows. There was neither day nor night. Their words seemed to rise, to vanish like smoke above them. Guivi read his lines as if laying down cards of no particular importance. Bridge was his passion. He gave it all his nights. Halfway through, he touched her shoulder lightly as he was doing an intimate part. She seemed not to notice. She was like a lizard, only her throat was beating. The next time he touched her hair. That single gesture, so natural as to be almost unintended, made her quiet, stilled her fears. She was his. She fled afterwards. She went directly back to the Hotel de Ville. Her room was filled with objects. On the desk were books still wrapped in brown paper, magazines in various languages, letters hastily read. There was a small anteroom, not regularly shaped, and a bedroom beyond. The bed was large. In the manner of a sequence when the camera carefully, increasing our apprehension, moves from detail to detail, the bathroom door, half-open, revealed a vast array of bottles, of dark perfumes, medicines, things unknown. Far below on Via Sistina was the sound of traffic.

The next day she was better, she was like a woman ready to work. She brushed her hair back with her hand as she read. She was attentive, once she even laughed.

They were brought small cups of coffee from across the courtyard.

"How does it sound to you?" she asked the writer.

"Well..." he hesitated.

He was a stupid man named Peter Lang, at one time Lengsner. He had seen her in all her sacred life, a figure of lights, he had read the article, the love letter written to her in *Bazaar*. It described her perfect modesty, her instinct, the shape of her behind. On the opposite page was the photograph he cut out and placed in his journal. This film he had written, this important work of the new and most worshipped of arts, already

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existed complete in his mind. Its power came from its chasteness, the discipline of its images. It was a film of indirection, the surface was calm with the calm of daily life. That was not to say still. Beneath the visible were emotions more potent for their concealment. Only occasionally, like the head of an iceberg ominously rising from nowhere and then dropping from sight did the terror come into view.

When she turned to him then, he was overwhelmed, he couldn't think of what to say. It didn't matter. Guivi gave an answer.

"I think we're still a little afraid of some of the lines," he said. "You know, you've written some difficult things."

"Well..."

"Almost impossible. Don't misunderstand, they're good, except they have to be perfectly done."

She had already turned away and was talking to the director.

"Shakespeare is filled with lines like this," Guivi continued. He began to quote Othello.

It was now Iles' turn, the time to expose his ideas. He plunged in. He was like a kind of crazy schoolmaster as he described the work, part Freud, part lovelorn columnist, tracing interior lines and motives deep as rivers. Members of the crew had sneaked in to stand near the door. Guivi jotted something in his script.

"Yes, notes, make notes," Iles told him, "I am saying some brilliant things."

A performance was built up in layers, like a painting, that was his method, to start with this, add this, then this, and so forth. It expanded, became rich, developed depths and undercurrents. Then in the end they would cut it back, reduce it to half its size. That was what he meant by good acting.

He confided to Lang,

"I never tell them everything. I'll give you an example: the scene in the clinic. I tell Guivi he's going to pieces, he thinks he's going to scream, actually scream. He has to stuff a towel in his mouth to prevent it.

"Then, just before we shoot, I tell him: Do it without the towel. Do you see?"

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His energy began to infect the performers. A mood of excitement, even fever came over them. He was thrilling them, it was their world he was describing and then taking to pieces to reveal its marvelous intricacies.

If he was a genius, he would be crowned in the end because, like Balzac, his work was so vast. He, too, was filling page after page, unending, crowded with the sublime and the ordinary, fantastic characters, insights, human frailty, trash. If I make two films a year for thirty years, he said... The project was his life.

At six the limousines were waiting. The sky still had light, the cold of autumn was in the air. They stood near the door and talked. They parted reluctantly. He had converted them, he was their master. They drove off separately with a little wave. Lang was left standing in the dusk.

There were dinners. Guivi sat with Anna beside him. It was the fourth day. She leaned her head against his shoulder. He was discussing the foolishness of women. They were not genuinely intelligent, he said, that was a myth of Western society.

"I'm going to surprise you," Iles said, "do you know what I believe? I believe they're not as intelligent as men. They are *more* intelligent."

Anna shook her head very slightly.

"They're not logical," Guivi said. "It's not their way. A woman's whole essence is here." He indicated down near his stomach.

"The womb," he said. "Nowhere else. Do you realize there are no great women bridge players?"

It was as if she had submitted to all his ideas. She ate without speaking. She barely touched dessert. She was content to be what he admired in a woman. She was aware of her power, he knelt to it nightly, his mind wandering. He was already becoming indifferent to her. He fucked her as one plays a losing hand, he did the best he could with it. The sperm leapt out of him. She moaned.

"I am really a romantic and a classicist," he said. "I have *almost* been in love twice."

Her glance fell, he told her something in a whisper.

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"But never really," he went on, "never deeply. No, I long for that. I am ready for it," he said.

Beneath the table her hand had discovered this. The waiters were brushing away the crumbs.

Lang was staying at the Inghilterra in a small room on the side. Long after the evening was over he still swam in thoughts of it. He washed his underwear distractedly. Somewhere in the shuttered city, the river black with fall, he knew they were together, he did not resent it. He lay in bed like a poor student —how little life changes from the first to the last—and fell asleep clutching his dreams. The windows were open. The cold air poured over him like sea on a blind sailor, drenching him, filling the room. He lay with his legs crossed at the ankle like a martyr, his face turned to God.

Iles was at the Grand in a suite with tall doors and floors that creaked. He could hear chambermaids pass in the hall. He had a cold and could not sleep. He called his wife in America, it was just evening there, and they talked for a long time. He was depressed: Guivi was no actor.

"What's wrong with him?"

"Oh, he has nothing, no depth, no emotion."

"Can't you get someone else?"

"It's too late."

They would have to work around it, he said. He had the telephone propped on the pillow, his eyes were drifting aimlessly around the room. They would have to change the character somehow, make the falseness a part of it. Anna was all right. He was pleased with Anna. Well, they would do something, pump life into it somehow, make dead birds fly.

By the end of the week they were rehearsing on their feet. It was cold. They wore their coats as they moved from one place to another. Anna stood near Guivi. She took the cigarette from his fingers and smoked it. Sometimes they laughed.

Iles was alive with work. His hair fell in his face, he was explaining actions, details. He didn't rely on their knowledge, he arranged it all. Often he tied a line to an action, that is to say the words were keyed by it: Guivi touched Anna's elbow, without looking, she said,

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"Go away."

Lang sat and watched. Sometimes they were working very close to him, just in front of where he was. He couldn't really pay attention. She was speaking *his* lines, things he had invented. They were like shoes. She tried them on, they were nice, she never thought who had made them.

"Anna has a limited range," Guivi confided.

Lang said yes. He wanted to learn more about acting, this secret world.

"But what a face," Guivi said.

"Her eyes..."

"There's a little touch of the idiot in them, isn't there?" Guivi said.

She could see them talking. Afterwards she sent someone to Lang. Whatever he had told Guivi, she wanted to know, too. Lang looked over at her. She was ignoring him.

He was confused, he did not know if it was serious. The minor actors with nothing to do were sitting on two old sofas. The floor was chalky, dust covered their shoes. Iles was following the scenes closely, nodding his approval, yes, yes, good, excellent. The script girl walked behind him, a stopwatch around her neck. She was forty-five, her legs ached at night. She went along noting everything, careful not to step on any of the half-driven nails.

"My love," Iles turned to her, he had forgotten her name. "How long was it?"

They always took too much time. He had to hurry them, force them to be economical.

At the end, like school, there was the final test. They seemed to do it all perfectly, the gestures, the cadences he had devised. He was timing them like runners. Two hours and twenty minutes.

"Marvelous," he told them.

That night Lang was drunk at the party the producer gave. It was in a small restaurant. The entry was filled with odors and displays of food, the cooks nodded from the kitchen. Fifty people were there, a hundred, crowded together and speaking different languages. Among them shone Anna like

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a queen. On her wrist was a new bracelet from Bulgari's, she had coolly demanded a discount, the clerk hadn't known what to say. She was in a slim gold suit that showed her breasts. Her strange, flat face seemed to float without expression among the others, sometimes she wore a faint, a drifting smile.

Lang felt depressed. He did not understand what they had been doing, the exaggerations dismayed him, he didn't believe in Iles, his energies, his insight, he didn't believe in any of it. He tried to calm himself. He saw them at the biggest table, the producer at Anna's elbow. They were talking, why was she so animated? They always come alive when the lights are on, someone said.

He watched Guivi. I am not interested in them, he thought. He could see Anna leaning across to speak, her long hair, her throat.

"It's stupid to be making it in color," he said to the man beside him.

"What?" He was a film company executive. He had a face like a fish, a bass, that had rotted. "What do you mean, not in color?"

"Black and white," Lang told him.

"What are you talking about? You can't sell a black and white film. Life is in color."

"Life?"

"Color is real," the man said. He was from New York. The ten greatest films of all time, the twenty greatest, were in color, he said.

"What about..." Lang tried to concentrate, his elbow slipped, "*The Bicycle Thief*?"

"I'm talking about modern films."

II.

Today was sunny. He was writing in brief, disconsolate phrases. *Yesterday it rained, it was dark until late afternoon, the*

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day before was the same. The corridors of the Inghilterra were vaulted like a convent, the doors set deep in the walls. Still, he thought, it was comfortable. He gave his shirts to the maid in the morning, they were back the next day. She did them at home. He had seen her bending over to take linen from a cabinet. The tops of her stockings showed—it was classic Bunuel—the mysterious white of her leg.

The girl from publicity called. They needed information for his biography.

"What information?"

"We'll send a car for you," she said.

It never came. He went the next day by taxi and waited thirty minutes in her office, she was in seeing the producer. Finally she returned, a thin girl with damp spots under the arms of her dress.

"You called me?" Lang said.

She did not know who he was.

"You were going to send a car for me."

"Mr. Lang," she suddenly cried. "Oh, I'm sorry."

The desk was covered with photos, the chairs with newspapers and magazines. She was an assistant, she had worked on *Cleopatra*, *The Bible*, *The Longest Day*. There was money to be earned in American films.

"They've put me in this little room," she apologized.

Her name was Eva. She lived at home. Her family ate without speaking, four of them in the sadness of bourgeois surroundings, the radio which didn't work, thin rugs on the floor. When he was finished, her father cleared his throat. The meat was better the last time, he said. The *last* time, her mother asked.

"Yes, it was better," he said.

"The last time it was tasteless."

"Ah, well, two times ago," he said.

They fell into silence again. There was only the sound of forks, an occasional glass. Suddenly her brother rose from the table and left the room. No one looked up.

He was crazy, this brother, well, perhaps not crazy but enough to make them weep. He would remain for days in

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his room, the door locked. He was a writer. There was one difficulty, everything worthwhile had already been written. He had gone through a period when he devoured books, three and four a day, and could quote vast sections of them afterwards, but the fever had passed. He lay on his bed now and looked at the ceiling.

Eva was nervous, people said. Of course, she was nervous. She had black hair, small teeth, and a life in which she had already given up hope. She was thirty. They had nothing for his biography, she told Lang. They had to have a biography for everybody. She suggested finally he write it himself. Yes, of course, he imagined it would be something like that.

Her closest friend, like all Italians she was alert to friends and enemies, her most useful friend was an hysterical woman named Mirella Ricci who had a large apartment and aristocratic longings. She also had the fears and illnesses of all women who live alone. Her friends were homosexuals and women who were separated. She had dinner with them in the evening, she telephoned them several times a day. She was a woman with large nostrils and white skin, white as paper, but she was still able to see white spots on it. Her doctor said they were a circulatory condition.

She was working on the film, like Eva. They talked of everyone. Iles: he knew actors, Mirella said. Whichever ones were brought in, he chose the best, well, he had made one or two mistakes. They were eating at Otello's, tortoises crawled on the floor. The script was interesting, Mirella said, but she didn't like the writer, he was cold. He was also a *frocio*, she knew the signs. As for the producer... she made a disgusted sound. He dyed his hair, she said. He looked thirty-nine but he was really fifty.

He had already tried to seduce her.

"When?" Eva said.

They knew everything. They were like nurses whose tenderness was dead. It was they who ran the sickhouse. They knew how much money everyone was getting, who was not to be trusted.

The producer: first of all he was impotent, Mirella said.

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When he wasn't impotent, he was unwilling, the rest of the time he didn't know how to go about it and when he did, it was unsatisfactory. On top of that, he was a man who was always without a girl.

Her nostrils had darkness in them. She expected waiters to treat her well.

"How is your brother?" she said.

"Oh, the same."

"He still isn't working?"

"He has a job in a record shop but he won't be there long. They'll fire him."

"What is wrong with men?" she said.

"I'm exhausted," Eva sighed. She was haggard from late hours. She had to type letters for the producer because one of his secretaries was sick.

"He tried to make love to me, too," she admitted.

"Tell me," Mirella said.

"At his hotel..."

Mirella waited.

"I brought him some letters. He insisted I stay and talk. He wanted to give me a drink. Finally he tried to kiss me. He fell on his knees—I was cowering on the divan—and said, Eva, you smell so sweet. I tried to pretend it was all a joke."

The joys of rectitude. They drove around in little Fiats. They paid great attention to their clothes.

The film was going well, a day ahead of schedule. Iles was working with a kind of vast assurance. He roamed around the great, black Mitchell in tennis shoes, he ate no lunch. The rushes were said to be extraordinary. Guivi never went to see them. Anna asked Lang about them, what did he think? He tried to decide. She was beautiful in them, he told her—it was true—there was a quality in her face which illuminated the entire film... he never finished. As usual, she was disinterested. She had already turned to someone else, the cameraman,

"Did you see them?" she said.

Iles wore an old sweater, the hair hung in his face. Two films a year, he repeated... that was the keystone of all his belief. Eisenstein only made six altogether, but he didn't work

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under the American system. Anyway, Iles had no confidence when he was at rest.

Whatever his weaknesses, his act of grandeur was in concealing the knowledge that the film was already wreckage: Guivi was simply not good enough, he worked without thinking, he worked as one eats a meal. Iles knew actors.

Farewell, Guivi. It was the announcement of death. He was already beginning to enter the past. He signed autographs, the space showing between his teeth. He charmed journalists. The perfect victim, he suspected nothing. The glory of his life had blinded him. He dined at the best tables, a bottle of fine Bordeaux before him. He mimicked the foolishness of Iles.

"Guivi, my love," he imitated, "the trouble is you are Russian, you are moody and violent. He's telling me what it is to be Russian. Next he'll start describing life under communism."

Anna was eating with very slow bites.

"Do you know something?" she said calmly.

He waited.

"I've never been so happy."

"Really?"

"Not in my whole life," she said.

He smiled. His smile was opera.

"With you I am the woman everyone believes I am," she said.

He looked at her long and deeply. His eyes were dark, the pupils invisible. Love scenes during the day, he thought, love scenes at night. People were watching them from all around the room. When they rose to go, the waiters crowded near the door.

Within three years his career would be over. He would see himself in the flickering television as if it were some curious dream. He invested in apartment houses, he owned land in Spain. He would become like a woman, jealous, unforgiving, and perhaps one day in a restaurant even see Iles with a young actor, explaining with the heat of a fanatic some very ordinary idea. Guivi was thirty-seven. He had a moment on the screen that would never be forgotten. Tinted posters of him

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would peel from the sides of buildings more and more remote, the resemblance fading, his name becoming stale. He would smile across alleys, into the sour darkness. Far-off dogs were barking. The streets smelled of the poor.

III.

There was a party for Anna's birthday at a restaurant in the outskirts, the restaurant in which Farouk, falling backwards from the table, had died. Not everyone was invited. It was meant to be a surprise.

She arrived with Guivi. She was not a woman, she was a minor deity, she was some beautiful animal innocent of its grace. It was February, the night was cold. The chauffeurs waited inside the cars. Later they gathered quietly in the cloakroom.

"My love," Iles said to her, "you are going to be very, very happy."

"Really?"

He put his arm around her without replying, he nodded. The shooting was almost over. The rushes, he said, were the best he had ever seen. Ever.

"As for this fellow..." he said, reaching for Guivi.

The producer joined them.

"I want you for my next picture, both of you," he announced. He was wearing a suit a size too small, a velvet suit bought on via Borgognona.

"Where did you get it?" Guivi said. "It's fantastic. Who is supposed to be the star here anyway?"

Posener looked down at himself. He smiled like a guilty boy.

"Do you like it?" he said. "Really?"

"No, where did you get it?"

"I'll send you one tomorrow."

"No, no..."

"Guivi, please," he begged, "I want to."

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He was filled with affection, the worst was past. The actors had not run away or refused to work, he was overcome with love for them, as for a bad child who unexpectedly does something good. He felt he must do something in return.

"Waiter!" he cried. He looked around, his gestures always seemed wasted, vanished in empty air.

"Waiter," he called, "champagne!"

There were twenty or so people in the room, other actors, the American wife of a count. At the table Guivi told stories. He drank like a Georgian prince, he had plans for Geneva, Gstaad. There was the Italian producer, he said, who had an actress under contract, she was a second Sophia Loren. He had made a fortune with her. Her films were only shown in Italy, but everyone went to them, the money was pouring in. He always kept the journalists away, he never let them talk to her alone.

"Sellerio," someone said.

"Yes," said Guivi, "that's right. Do you know the rest of the story?"

"He sold her."

But half the contract only, Guivi said. Her popularity was fading, he wanted to get everything he could. There was a big ceremony, they invited all the press. She was going to sign. She picked up the pen and leaned forward a little for the photographers, you know, she had these enormous, eh... well, anyway, on the paper she wrote: with his finger Guivi made a large X. The newsmen all looked at each other. Then Sellerio took the pen and very grandly, just below her name: here Guivi made one X and next to it, carefully, another. Illiterate. That's the truth. They asked him, look, what is that second X for? You know what he told them? *Dottore.*

They laughed. He told them about shooting in Naples with a producer so cheap they threw a cable across the trolley wires to steal power. He was clever, Guivi, he was a storyteller in the tradition of the east, he could speak three languages. Later, when she finally understood what had happened, Anna remembered how happy he seemed this night.

"Shall we go on to the Hostaria?" the producer said.

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"What?" Guivi asked.

"The Hostaria..." As with the waiters, it seemed no one heard him. "The Blue Bar," he said.

"Come on, we're going to the Blue Bar," he announced.

Outside the Botanical Gardens, parked in the cold, the small windows of the car frosted, Lengsner sat. His clothing was open. His flesh was pale in the refracted light. He had eaten dinner with Eva. She had talked for hours in a low, uncertain voice, it was a night for stories, she had told him everything, about Coleman the head of publicity, Mirella, her brother, Sicily, life. On the road to the mountains which overlooked Palermo there were cars parked at five in the afternoon. In each one was a man, a handkerchief spread in his lap.

"I am so lonely," she said suddenly.

She had only three friends, she saw them all the time. They went to the theater together, the ballet. One was an actress. One was married. She was silent, she seemed to wait. The cold was everywhere, it covered the glass. Her breath was in crystals, visible in the dark.

"Can I kiss it?" she said.

She began to moan then, as if it were holy. She touched it with her forehead. She was murmuring. The nape of her neck was bare.

She called the next morning. It was eight o'clock.

"I want to read something to you," she said.

He was half-asleep, the racket was already drifting up from the street. The room was chill and unlighted. Within it, distant as an old record, her voice was playing. It entered his body, it commanded his blood.

"I found this," she said. "Are you there?"

"Yes."

"I thought you would like it."

She read from an article, her voice was plain.

In the February of 1868, in Milan, Prince Umberto had given a splendid ball. *In a room which blazed with light the young bride who was one day to be Queen of Italy was introduced. It was*

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the event of the year, crowded and gay, and while the world of fashion amused itself thus, at the same hour and in the same city a lone astronomer was discovering a new planet, the ninety-seventh on Chacornac's...

Silence.

In his mind, still warmed by the pillow, it seemed a holy calm had descended. He lay like a saint. He was naked, his ankles, his hipbones, his throat.

He heard her call his name. He said nothing. He lay there becoming small, smaller, vanishing. The room became a window, a facade, a group of buildings, squares and sections, in the end all of Rome. His ecstasy was beyond knowing. The roofs of the great cathedrals shined in the winter air.

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Michael Brownstein

United at First

United at first
ham and cheese fall apart and slip
through my trembling hands

Just indoors and plenty hungry
from playing on the rough Pacific's shore
where it becomes very grainy and sort of deranged
with shattered fortress rocks and hopping surf
disappears in a second like breath escaping
at Mendocino on the high-strung edge
of California

Fog brings visions

My mind is soaking wet, but still works
overtime like my mouth
from looking at the protein
and melted green foam floating
on Pacific membrane far below

Come see this sandwich

Wiry Indian braves "long ago"
watch closely
as the sandwich is gobbled
by a lost Spaniard. They comment on it.
They get hungry, too
and start for the ambushed stranger
who backs away, "Doan touch me"
"Stay clear" "Watch out, my friends"

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and proceeds to draw a glass-cutter from his holster
making the Indians wince and reel

But this harried white man is falling asleep
in a pouch of early morning sunlight.
Like a baby, he soon forgets
the secrets of his craft. No more sandwiches.

Stagehands now carry through the bleached eucalyptus
a huge plaster of paris sandwich, spray painted
bright red and green sliced tomatoes
and sprigs of parsley between the trees.
The sandwich is propped against the Spaniard's foot
for him to meditate upon

Come see this sandwich

And he "comes to see it"
in his dreams. In his waking too.

2.

A fortnight later: the besieged Moor
reaches the Great Salt Lake. He remains depressed
and takes his own life. Booths sell replicas of his spurs...

Things are going badly for the settlers and their wives

Some take to repairing old landscapes
others make hot soup from the gloom

One other
standing alone like a
lonesome pine at midnight
sings to a nervous pony and the moon
and his wife, his children, his ego
their friends and grade school teachers
and, via live recording, millions more

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He's the same desperate Spaniard
who's scratching at your door

3.

By definition, Indians migrate and evolute
taking thousands of years
to do this... It's the whittling of a flute.
The separate tribes don't know each other
although they've heard stories
about a char-broiled elk steak across the Great Water
the great warm water
and bags of Wonder-Woman Tea

Now you're *really* hungry and
unwind a strip of dried buffalo
nickels, stored in plugs of virgin American snow

Maiden snowfall, storms of the young.
Lovely changes of light and texture
on faultless winter mornings, got to move on.

Watch you flip from nymph to mother in seconds flat
giving birth on the road, juggling and shaking

Spots and deep red stars appear before your eyes

Visions of nostalgic wonder

Toothpaste

Carrots

Pork chops

Ajax

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Out the remote-controlled
doors of a supermarket, where are you?...
Oh yes, there is your soul brother's Chevrolet
and taking your soul sister's underpass
you pull up at a front door just in time
to see it burn, lighting up a marathon
of bodies wrapped in flame-colored clothing
galloping across the lawn toward where you sit
revving up the motor and releasing a misty sigh
as your eyes glass over.

4.

Glass over, twin instruments of all vision
filling past its brim
        a masonite Dixie cup
on the inventor's nerve-ridden worktable.
Nearby, a foam-induced portrait of his daughter,
some lucite toy dreamers, and a thought-pencil
with built-in spurt control... The inventor
is madly successful, but too neurotic to live in peace
"Mystery drops its cape across my knees," he sings
to himself, "without even saying *please*"

Shedding a cough, he pulls himself to summer
valley-view window... Happy window of carefree dreams.
"What do I see," he muses in childlike delicate reverie—
"I see a human being stalking through trees at me"

It's the mailman! He has the day's circulars
in his buff leather pouch, a cigarette at his lip,
a rip in his trousers just above the knee.
His name is Albert. His friends call him Albert.
But the inventor simply calls him over
asks for mail, gets it, and pauses
wondering if he can say anything to awaken this poor fellow
from years of barren slumber in yesterday's forests.

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The inventor, however, is much too condescending
to give sweet advice, and a mailman
is precisely what Albert wants and needs to be.
The two men part company after exchanging a few words
and a promise made to meet upon the morrow

Upon the morrow sits a televised bird
united at first, then it comes apart
so it can be packed & shipped in wings and legs
to the inventor: he has it now, but will he make it chirp?

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Aram Saroyan

Poems (1962-1968)

I seldom remember what
someone was wearing
what color their eyes are
and I see even less clearly
the best of my friends

D. today
and I don't remember
if he still has
or as I heard earlier
has shaved off
his mustache.

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Memory

I (the stone) go (don't
blind you! even
know
you! girl-behind-wire-fence
in Switzerland—I'm ten—lobbing
stones to—you were beautiful—I
remember
running—as you do, hand to
the side of your face,
on an eye put out?

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Marijuana Notation

my eyes—
back there
in the mirror
where I left them

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Poem

as my own noise's, no
one's,

listening,
split.

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Quote

Peaceful room,
peaceful blanket,
large pillow, cold,
interesting art...

. . .

an oyster
can't
read this

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Big thoughts.

. . .

traffic
an airplane
the typewriter

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Specks Saga

Paul Spike

I. The Rise

Change your thoughts and you will change your world. It's guaranteed for ninety days. You can't buy a man with a cup of coffee and a sandwich. Spread out mats for him. Offer him stools. Let the host present the cup, the guest will return it. Wash the beaker, set down the goblet. Line a colander with cheese cloth. Spoon in the cheese mixture and then fold ends of cloth over the top. Imagine the excavated dirt. Set in larger bowl, open eyes, catch any drippings.

Comfort is a surface, a straight line. The emptiness of comfort astounds man. It is like the world's most powerful ray gun.

Headache again thought Mary Ellen, flicking out her fingers to lock the red wire into the small red terminal of the distributor casing. Then she sent if off on its way down the black rubber conveyor belt. Off to the waiting hand of her friend Claudine who would snap the two rubber nipples into place, top and bottom, and pass it, in its turn, on to Miss Kostoy who checked automatically for terminal imperfection before throwing it back into the flood of identification tags and parts of black plastic tractor distributors which flowed on to the runty girl who was Final Inspection, No. 1774, sec. 07. Her early afternoon headache and as usual the break was an hour

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off, an hour and ten minutes. Red wire into red dot terminal, snap, replace, hand out, shut, snap, replace, snap, replace and retrieve.

Mary Ellen in her sanitary green coverall smock has been at work only six weeks so she is still not sure of herself, nor really one of the family here in the Mahwah plant. Drinking coffee in her room, lonely and tattered in the Dulston Hotel in Mahwah she wonders about her loneliness and blames herself for not being friendly enough. She knows she is too shy. Afraid to talk at lunch. She only talks to Claudine, her friend. Mary Ellen likes to lie down in her slip with a cup of coffee very hot, careful not to spill, before running to the bus at seven fifteen A.M. Soft brown hair and full lips, perhaps she is too skinny. Her job pays well.

Walt used to take her to his company dances and usually they were happy times unless he got stinking and started chasing other girls, even other men's wives and telling her to sit in the car. I'm not taking any more nagging bullshit! And then he left. She got her divorce after seven months.

So this was Solomon Island. A Princess extension in the bedroom gives a nightlong sense of security when Dad's away. "How are you sweetheart?"

"I love you."

"You're mine."

"All yours. Oceans of love and millions of kisses and may you soon be in your own home with your own husband."

"Today you got three men, none of whom had met the other previously, to talking about religion naturally and interestingly in a couple of minutes. What's your technique?"

"This is from me to you, a rich spasm. I notice you are 'straight up.' Perhaps God created it so."

"Hungarians love good food. Wet and heavy like a soggy sheet and sprinkled with a few old raisins. For example, thumb-sucking and masturbation are tension reducing but the former does not satisfy the hunger nor does the latter serve for the cause of reproduction."

"You have found the key: by Faith you have accepted God's power and He has given you the hint you needed."

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The world's most powerful ray gun...

"I cannot advocate too strongly that marriages be built on spiritual foundations."

Rock of Ages...

If you receive a malicious or obscene phone call: hang up! Do not keep talking. The other party may be in the middle of an orgasm. That is what the caller wants. Always, before, Mary had played tennis with her father on Sunday mornings. He had seemed marvelously youthful to her.

Even after a hard-fought set, in the most intense heat, his sparse hair lay neatly in place and his tough face remained dry and his breathing regular.

Chris stretched out in his seat aboard the 707 and suddenly received an image from the past. From his boyhood in Rhode Island. It was of the back of his father's hardware store where he worked after school and summers. Ah, he shut his eyes and sucked in the cool musty air and the darkness of the store, the rows of boxes and the bags of seed and fertilizer. Shelves of paint and racks of tools. And the clanging of the register. Chris had liked to work there beside his parents. He had been a hard worker just as he was a diligent student in the local high school. He was a tall good-looking boy with jet black hair and flashing eyes which changed color depending on whether he was standing in the sun or the shade. They were blue in the shade and brown in the sun. He was defensive about this one deformity in his physique and for a period of his early adolescence he walked around squinting so that no one could tell exactly what color they were. When girls asked him about his eyes, he answered, "What difference does it make?" They never asked again. They usually asked him these questions up in the hills, in his car, a beauty it won him two prizes at custom shows.

Then Chris was awarded a full scholarship to Brown University. It was the happiest day in his parents' lives. But, after only a year and a semester there, the Dean of Students called him into his paneled office off the Quad and told him, he

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paused and hesitated, Chris had flunked out. Too much social life in the beer-soaked cellars of Brown's fraternities. Too much athletic enthusiasm and not enough time behind the books and in the labs. He couldn't go home, back to the store. His parents would never forgive him. He packed up and went to New York. And two weeks later his mother sent his notice of induction into the Army. And then two years later, he was back in the Big Apple, in New York. Hungry, depressed and without the faintest notion of where he could find a job.

Recently, rioters had taken over an entire section of the country. Led by two Senators and an epileptic, they were in complete control of Nebraska, Missouri and Kansas. All state borders were barricaded and the rebels confiscated for their own use a factory which was the sole source of chemical Mace in the United States. This was the property of Mr. Thaddeus Mace.

Nick Vicarion came out of the foreman's office. He was a tall man in his early fifties, his face was ridged and cut with the scars of struggle, a life of work and brawls and falling off cattle cars into luncheonette fistfights as if he were an ordinary slob but something more, a modern risk with a family to support. He drank a lot but was now a leader of the rioters, the discontented and the disconnected. He had problems. Too many punks thrill-seeking ran off into the corn fields with an aerosol spray can of knock-out gas. They thought they had found the ultimate high: unconsciousness. Coma... with no dreams. Just a brain full of dull neutral gas. Nick Vicarion was in charge of security around the Mace plant. His ass was in trouble, big trouble.

Pepe came to in the chill of the corn. The twilight sky was enormous in its windy isolation crow-eyes. He heard the dreams of his boyhood run behind the Mexican stove. This was the footstep coming through his empty belly. Red beans in a mush on the burnt spoon. The flies and the crabs. He raised the can, he felt his finger press the tiny plastic button and the soft whoosh...

Vicarion used to be Thaddeus Mace's gardener but now he

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was in rebellion. They wanted their rights. The television came out in eerie ghost-blue light on the modern Dodge City street, empty but smashed up Pontiacs and heel marks on the rain damp blacktop of the A&P parking lot. Once when he was tying up a rose bush, he had been startled when a cowboy boot drove six inches up his spine, cracking his guts open in a surprise of violence and blackout. It had been old Mr. Mace. He laughed and walked on leaving his gardener in the thorns.

Mr. Mace was an ex-Rough Rider, he shot his way up San Juan Hill beside Teddy and then up the corporate staircase, executive by executive falling before his young boots and knowledge of where and what a buck is: he knew his money. And now he was in Washington at a top level conference in the heart chamber of the Justice Department, laying out plans for the imminent recapture of the liberated States. They decided on a simple plan. At a given signal, thousands of soldiers dressed like carnival workers would ride up the various approach highways to the captured territory. The rioters, it was well known, were in poor communication with one another. Thus, each group of people manning their individual barricades would think, "Here comes the circus!" The soldiers would smile and push into position a neon atomic calliope which would om-pa-pa while midget riot police hopped about in pig costumes and blue lace collars. At a designated time, the calliopes, perhaps ten thousand of them, would shoot ultra low frequency sonic booms into the enemy zone. This would create a net of sonic waves, a sonic checker board. The frequency was set to freeze human nerve cells. Also, the victim made a mess in his pants.

Vicarion looked out over the beautiful rolling turf of America, he saw the golden ears of corn and the distant mountains like massive toys but spectacular because they were real. He thought of the movies and he thought of the sunset on the plains. Once, Indians might have set up tents on this very plateau. The neon out on Route 66 was coming to life in reds, yellows, blues and greens. The rioters had lost, he felt this in his gut but didn't know when exactly the feeling had been born. They had asked too much. He once had been so com-

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fortable, so happy grilling steaks and drinking dry London gin with lemon soda mixers in the hammock of his suburban house. He loved his family very much. He had been satisfied with the programs on his television. He wished he had the world's biggest ray gun for tomorrow. What would it feel like to be assassinated?

The sound of crickets out in the fields of the American farm country were crisp and every now and then mixed with the hiss of spray gas.

The professor made a motion for him to sit down beside the desk. There was a moment of silence in which they both looked at the cluttered desk. Then Eddie cleared his throat and said, "Sir, I have had personal problems this term which made it impossible for me to attend too many classes."

"Never mind, son. Does that really matter with four of our states seceding from the Union. That this nation is on the verge of destruction, cannot be denied any more. This may be it! You can have your C- that's not important. Mark my words. What is important is whether or not you youngsters are going to learn a lesson here. Realize what you have done! This is civil war!"

The first thing Chris heard was the roar of the huge jet engines dragging him through the sky and then he realized he had been asleep. He looked at his watch; it had been a good twenty minute nap. Her hand was warm inside his fly. Just then she was trying to maneuver his erection inside the tangle of his shorts so that she could get a firm grip on it. After an instant of grappling, this was done. Her index finger found his glans and chaffed the little mound of tissue gently. Then for a second scratched his penis with her silver-painted nail. Chris looked up at the stewardess and smiled. "What's your name?" he asked.

"Darlene."

"What difference does it make?" He ran his hand slowly up the sheen of her stocking. Slowly and smoothly over the tan silk. Until he reached the softest pillow in the world: her

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gorgeous thigh, bare and rounded and up above the tight silk panties stretched over the damp blonde mount of the goddess Venus, who nobody believed in anymore.

He poked a finger under the thin crease of elastic and into the gush of her light groove, up to the pink bubble, wobbly as a greased marble. A pearl under his finger tip. And then he was back with Noel in her Sutton Place apartment. He had taken her out for a bite of supper after the movie and then walked her across the fanfare of the East Side and up to her place. She invited him up for a nightcap and he had accepted, eagerly, she thought and smiled to herself. Chris was sitting on the edge of the couch when Noel came out of the kitchen with the two highballs in her hands. She gave him his rye and ginger and took a healthy sip from her own vodka and coke. Then, suddenly, without any warning, she was on her knees before him with her hands clutching his ankles and her face burrowing in his groin through the thin material of his summer trousers.

"I want you more than anything. I need you, Chris," she moaned to his penis. He was taken aback. It had happened so suddenly. He took another sip of drink. Then grabbed the nape of her neck

"I want *you*, baby!"

"Good good good, I'm so glad glad," she moaned.

In the locker room of an Idaho junior high school, twenty riot police were hanging up their clothes, counting their change and getting into the carnival costumes. Tons of muscular lard with red splotches on their thighs and great knit underpants, perfumed feet and teeth as clean as jewels they joked about what a handcuff across the knuckles could do to some one's eyeball.

As we saw the police rip into the demonstrators, tearing clumps of hair from pretty heads and beating boys to their knees where they filled their mouths with steel-capped boots, we began to shout and to set up a chant: Mace Must Go, Mace Must Go, Mace Must Go! I found myself in this mob shouting a different slogan, one which was not taken up by more than two or three others: Mace Must Die, Mace

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Must Die! We knew there was a difference in slogans and that words made slogans into the world's most powerful thighs. I lay down on top of the language and found myself entering an interior universe, hung with adjectives and clustered on the floor were the colorful nouns. I found enough for a sentence and then . . .

She had his long dong out and was resting for a moment on her haunches smiling at its bulbous head stuffed with hot stuff. She leaned forward and gave it a lick, then another, then ten more. Then she slowly took the tip, big as an orange, into her straining wet lips. She had a full mouth and she shut her eyes. She sucked.

The traffic came across town in a flash flood of honking horns and then white doves, one million little feathers, swung into the lagoon. He knew the buzzing in his organ. Electric wires spelling BINGO on the steps of his nervous cathedral, the back brain and then the flash of thick come in her throat. It was splashy with salted almonds and she swallowed twenty hungry times, opened her eyes, looked up and grinned at him, his penis still in the pink gap of her throat. She said. "Let's go in the bedroom."

Material comfort is simply a beginning. A mark it has taken us millions of years to take. Man needs a context beyond comfort. We need a group consciousness, the consciousness we left behind in the ocean, in the jungle and in the huts. The world will eventually become one planet-village. We will be primitive once more for all men will be ignorant of morality again, all men will share the same interior tools. Eventually, it will be unnecessary for man to work. Eventually, it will not be possible for man to work.

But creation will continue: the creation of beauty and of time.

What time is it, wondered Chris as he stepped out of his trousers. Noel was already naked and waited across the dark in her Hollywood bed. He could hear the traffic on Sutton Place. He could hear the soft plink-plink as Noel brushed the lint from between her toes with a finger nail. He dropped his shorts and tip-toed to the bed. "What time is it?" he asked as

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he gathered her cold flesh in his arms.

"Are you as worried about these riots as I am, Chris?" He could not answer so he concentrated on the sound of his nerve cells as they splashed against the ceiling of his sexual receptors.

"Noel, I think these riots are the worst thing that ever happened to our country, save, perhaps, for the Civil War and the assassination of all our greatest leaders. These riots, this lawlessness, makes me sick to be an American. Young people today know no better. I'm not surprised, the way they have been brought up: 'ethical culture,' baby books, et al. But the adults, they're the ones who I just can't find it in my heart to understand. They make me want to cry sometimes. I don't want even to talk about it anymore. Let us go to sleep, okay?"

"I love you Chris. You're the best." He thought about this and concluded she meant "in bed."

Chris imagined he could almost feel balmy air inside his pressurized cabin, thousands of feet up. But he knew it was a silly fantasy. For some reason, he suddenly thought of Holbach. He was a Newtonian who believed science explained the world and that there was no need for a first cause. Chris believed deeply, with all his heart, in the non-existence of any first cause. That's why we can have all these jazz masses. Chris liked Holbach for not believing in first causes. He hated the philosopher named Ricardo, the man responsible for the Iron Law of Wages. Just then, before he could visualize all the poor people doomed by Ricardo to starvation and venereal disease, the wings dipped and the big craft fell back to earth.

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II. And Fall

She is sitting in a white string shift, her back to the bay and a smile flickering as he walks up the dock. Tall as a Watusi, she seems. Dark brown hair flowing long, a rich mane crossing the small elegant bust. A face which is deadpan and wealth and front page, definitely front page. Chris nods to this stranger and finds a seat on another bench. They are waiting for the boat which will carry them across the mile or so of dancing blue water to Cole's Island. My first vacation in three years, Chris thinks. The sun is beginning to boil the atmosphere into a tight grease. He has trouble keeping his eyes open in the glare. The island looks too scraggly and thin in the distance. He has heard so much about the place. Will he make out all right over there? He wonders, scratches his face, fingers his tennis shoe. He glances at this towering beauty. Her legs are ivory, long shapely tusks. Her hips are too thin for him, perhaps. He likes a tight aristocratic ass but this is too tight, almost too aristocratic. He moves his eyes up to inspect her...

"Do you like my breasts? Or do you find them too diminutive for your taste?" she speaks very crisp with the dry ice and needles of a Back Bay girl. Radcliffe?

"Excuse me," Chris is abashed.

"I mean, buster, how do you like your tits? Melons or hardballs?"

"Excuse me. Did you think I was looking at you or something?"

"Of course, and why not? Actually, you look like a hardball man. You can almost see my nipples through this string thing. Nice, huh? I paid my ass for it. You better believe it those chi-chi Village shops."

"My name is Chris Richards."

"I am Manda d'Cours Vermillion Vaugir. Are you a guest of Cole's too?"

"Afraid not. I've got a room at the New Collision."

"Ghastly place!"

"They tell me Cole is quite a host. Is that true what *Time* said about his parties, Miss Vaugir?"

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"Bet on it if you want darling, I never know what to believe about the little fatman. He's quite a host. If *Time* says it, it's true. Kiss me?"

They talked and laughed their way across the bay and when they reached the other side Manda invited Chris to come up to Cole's hotel. She got into a yellow bikini while he looked around her terrace and then she led him down to the private beach, a perfect crescent set into a lush little hill, the trees were full of parrots and servants ran up and down the shaded paths in white jackets carrying trays full of pastel drinks.

"But I don't want to join the firm, Dad. And don't tell me one more time, please just don't keep repeating..."

"Don, do you *know* what it's like not to have all the breaks? You have enough food, enough clothing and shelter and money and a good background and a degree from Princeton. These are some terrific breaks, Don. Now you want to throw them away? I've spent my whole life trying to make you people comfortable."

"That's just it. What does that mean, comfort? What does it mean to be relaxed and comfortable when millions of people are starving?"

"They don't have your breaks, Don."

"Listen to him, Donny."

"Mom, Dad, can't you understand that comfort means nothing to me."

"If you go limp cocksucker I'll kill you!"

"Send in the fifty-four mortars to perimeter three. Give Don's squad a back-up. Let Willy hold the flank and Moroni will put a tail on the arrow."

"Can't we just be friends?"

"The assassin was apprehended at 0650 hours..."

"I saw it!"

"Oh yeah sure! tell me ha ha ha tell me again about your 'truth' and 'beauty' baloney. Those are just your wild notions, Don. Wait until you have some family of your own. What do you know, frankly? I'm fifty-two years old and I've done..."

He met the elderly professor on his way to the bar. "Hello, Dr. Banner. How are you this evening?"

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"Fine, Willy, fine. On your way over to the Tiger Inn? I'll walk with you, if I may." They decided to have a pitcher of beer and found a booth towards the rear of the darkened tavern. Groups of students were clustered at every table, some singing, some talking, one boy in an absurd hat reeling in some solitary revel from table to table, the waitresses dodging him as they delivered their pitchers of beer.

"What did he say then, Don?" He explained his father's anger and ignorance to the man.

"Now, listen, Don. Of course your father isn't too anxious or even capable of giving up his personal vision of life. He will probably never reach such a point. My advice, I know you are going to moan, is try and compromise with your parents as much as possible. At least while you are living at home."

The waiter brought him a Silver Star in an iced sterling mug and Chris reclined back into his rattan beach chair. Manda's bikini was astonishingly erotic. The material was thin and metallic, extremely clinging. He could just imagine what her mount of Venus must look like yet he could only imagine this through an imaginary net of yellow material strung across the front of his cortex. The beach was fine and white; it brought the word "emerald" to a spot just behind Chris' lips. The mystery was like that of an air mattress in the vacuum of the sunshine.

"Are you feeling it?" she asked.

"What exactly?"

"My charisma... your drink... the expensive sunshine and the overdose of vitahealth trickling through your short-hairs, what do you think?"

"What are we going to do about dinner?" Manda laughed as the waiter brought another round to their table. Chris was turning drunken somersaults above the white sand.

"Let's finish these drinks and then decide."

"Okay by me," she said and took a healthy swallow.

Don faced his father across the mediation table. "I'll give you the railroads from Long Island to Rochester, Calcutta to Bombay, Minsk to Istanbul. Also increased wage benefits for hot-box specialists and for caterers." Don removed a felt-tip-

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ped pen from his breast pocket and awaited his father's reply.

"Son, I cannot accept that offer. Honestly, are you serious? I want some peace here. I want total disarmament and a hot line set up from Washington, Paris, and Rio directly to Peking. The Israelis will have to defer to our council, at least for a few more years."

"Sure, fine. But right now I'm trying to pin down this transpo section, Dad."

"Calcutta has an epidemic and the guerillas won't pump out the Pittsburgh enclave for months, which directly affects all of the East coast. How about this submarine highway in the Pacific?"

"You agreed to leave that route for Russia, a token perhaps, they'll go for it. The American government will iron that out."

"I want to keep this in the family, you know that, Don."

"Look, Dad, what about railroad ticket concessions in college towns. Do you want that as well as the heliport and the Nigerian mines?"

"Sis can have the Rose Bowl and we'll give your mother the parade."

It was dark and the sky was full of silver pins by the time Manda took drunken Chris by the hand and led him up the white gravel path to her room. They decided to have dinner on her terrace and Chris took a long, steaming shower to melt the alcohol out of his system.

As it touched the lunar ringular probe, its nose cone retracted into a concave "dwelling" position. The specks seemed to come in patterns reminiscent of the structure of molecular music. We have our feelers in Decode hampering the decoders into a sitting position.

They lowered their tariffs after two days of the idiocy. Everyone recognizes their action as typical of the Eskimo mind.

Who would you choose? The Eskimo or the Eskimo-like Indian? How about if they wanted to be your valet? Or just dry your back? Or touch your fish with their bare hands?

The idiocy was mirrored in her pills.

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Belgium crashed today!

Brussels in agony of poverty! Hungary sends aid! Eskimos sending fish. U.S.A. pledges "investigation."

Manda insisted on taking Chris to the nightclub owned by Cole Klein: the El Gitano. It was located on another small private island, reachable only by one of Klein's private launches.

The first thing Chris noticed inside the place was that he was freezing. His hands felt blue. Klein had installed the finest air-conditioners in the world, custom-built in Germany, designed by his own Japanese engineers. It was very cold and very dark. Red lumia light flickered on genuine English oak walls. The club had three stories. The Watchtower Room was the first floor: gypsy dancers, flaming steaks and strictly for the tourists. The "Cave" was located one floor down and was a romantic underwater dance-floor. Finally, in an elevator in the Cave, you could descend to "Cole's Heaven": strictly members only, the most exclusive room for five hundred miles.

Manda pointed him out, a tiny fat man with a red face and a dome who squinted through radium shades and was wearing an olive Universe Blazer designed by Jaime de la Hunky of Alicante and London.

Dark conversation and another round please! Another round pumped into Bolivia caviar insects climbing out of rotting democracy specks... just like the bandits to take this jeep... and make it "straight up."

The Benson children always spent the Fourth of July watching their daddy light Roman candles in the vacant lot in Union City. The night Mr. Benson saw lines on his tongue twisted the fire-stick in the soul food his shit hole his armpit the children screaming from behind the glaze hurry up, hurry up daddy, let's go to the vacant lot!

Jim came into the tent and lay his rifle down. He lay down on the blanket. His breath was roaring, full of choking gasps. A streak of jungle grease across his cheek. Morris came in.

"That was a close one! Charlie almost had us with those 54's down by Pien Tup until those Mustangs buzzed in. You feeling okay, Jim?"

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"My penis is buzzing."

"Er... you want me to call the Sarge or Doc?"

"No."

"You thirsty? Want some water?" he offered him his canteen.

"No. What would you think I want, Morris. No, forget that question."

"Sure thing, Jimbo, sure thing." He went hunting through his pack for some chocolate.

Cole comes bobbing across the room towards Manda and Chris.

"Well well well. Hello Manda darling dahling girl. Who's the penis?"

"Cole Klein I'd like you to meet Chris Richards. Chris is a hardball man and my latest escort, also I think he's not wealthy."

"Nice fella, nice fella." Cole begins to pick up empty glasses in a mockery of his bondage slaves imported directly from Capetown to service his club and hotel.

"Nigger, oh nigger, COME CLEAN THIS TABLE!" he shouts towards the kitchen. Then he turns to the blasé yet nervous Mr. Stu, his maître d'hôtel. "Give Miss Vaugir and her date this table, all right, Stu?"

"Certainly." He clicks wrists and presents menus.

"I cannot accept the nomination."

"The pleasure is mine."

Cole leaves on another tour of his room, stopping at each table for two or three nice minutes of money talk, mopping his brow with an orange saffron handkerchief. He never orders a drink and the house rule is: No Free Ones. After thirty minutes, he's back at their table.

"What's that you drinking, Chris fella?"

"Red Eye, your native specialty, Mr. Klein."

"You like to fuck, Chris?"

"Er... sure, of course, as much as anybody. More probably."

"We don't allow enthusiasm in here, son. Now hear this: don't fuck with Manda. She's a whore. A whore who only fucks for prestige and trades in men for shopping carts and the right mascara."

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"Oh, Cole, you must be kidding, you little millionaire."

"Excuse me, Mr. Klein. Don't you care for Miss Vaugir?"

"You want a hot tip?"

"Not another joke, Cole darling," sighs Manda.

"Buy Music. Forget cold securities and watch out for oil. The assassination has changed everything. The fix is in. Buy Music. That's it, straight from the Big Boy, now you two dance or something..." he fades off into little candles and red linen tableclothes.

"Wow, he's something!"

"He's right, you know. Buy Music, you'll make a killing." She took his hand and led him out onto the sparkling marble.

Mr. Cosgrave was standing beside his camper when he first heard the shadow of a rumble. He looked up to Old Baldy but saw nothing. An auditory hallucination? This vacation had been a hallucination. He continued to tie down the mattress with his plastic rope. Mrs. Cosgrave was washing out their breakfast dishes in the ladies' comfort station. Then he heard the second rumble then the explosion numbers one through fifty. Crashed rocks gravel boots chipping trees into matches his teeth birds a declared emergency his body squash red stains gauze cast off.

When Chris finally suggested that they leave, Manda agreed readily. She rose and clapped for Mr. Stu. He loped across the carpet with a handful of menus.

"Why yes, Miss Vaugir?"

"Send the bill to me, Stu."

"Certainly."

The dark water of the bay lapping against the side of their cruiser was hypnotic. Manda leaned against Chris and sighed. He was staring up at the enormous full moon. The biggest he had ever seen.

"Manda, do you wonder why the stars look so good when it's hot? And why the moon seems so much bigger when you are out to sea?"

"Wasn't that squirt Cole just horrible?" she replied.

"I suppose so."

"Chris would you make love to me tonight, now, this very

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night?" She ran her hand up his thigh to his penis which immediately focused. Her other hand went around his waist and massaged his sharp coccyx.

"You can make me so happy, lover boy." Chris then went fumbling for her clitoris in a pile of garter belt, slip, skirt and panties. "I 'm rather well-dressed," she giggled. They did not notice the boatman photographing them with his infra-red flashcube for Cole's collection.

The point is not to radicalize a small group but rather to politicize an entire population and then the entire human race. Then it simply becomes a cycle of de-politicalization and re-politicalization. This will keep the hungry happy, while the scientists can get us farther into space. The computor went dead with a leafy tube sputtering in static rings. Isn't this Wednesday? said the editor. He made a blue mark and thought a little about changing the world.

The computor changed the soap for the men. Jim came into the room with his hands full of circuits. He dropped a tungsten prophylactic gauge, the duplication boys screeched and ran to him, tackling him around the neck and dragging him towards the giant E-series 7077. He went to sit down.

The newest conflict in Asia as reported to the negotiators. He lay down as he stood up as he tried to smile the tears filled up his hands as he started to stare at them his eyes had already been dead ten seconds.

Chris got his socks off. He glanced across the terrace. Manda was naked. He stared at the glowing white of her rear. She was staring wistfully over the darkened salamander of Cole's Island. He went to her and took her in his arms. The wind drove a cool moisture into their embrace. She shivered and turned her cruel cats' teeth into his lips, a canyon of low roar somewhere down her throat.

Over and over the waves of desire pounded on their fictional bodies, the limitless darkness plunging in a swarm of phallic references and grunting rhetoric. They made love like drugstore sex, like cardboard. So full were they of their one dimension! Over and across the linoleum of the luncheonette they rolled, knocking over a rack of paperbacks, grinding

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their loins together in a pile of 95-cent readers, the slick centerfolds of the place dancing to some inner-knowledge, finally, then, after the paper trash of their phoney orgasm, Manda farted and looked up at her man.

The tape left in Chris' hotel room follows:

Spike: Chris, what was your nickname in high school?
Chris: Move your pencil.
Spike: Why?
Chris: Is this all an elaborate way of getting me to fix you up with girls?
Spike: Have you ever felt the Siberian winter lace up your ribs in a perfect scream?
Chris: I would like to talk by myself now. You, so far, have been moving your pencil, or pressing your keys, some writing procedure, until you have arrived at exactly this spot.
Spike: No, I haven't arrived anywhere. That's the funny part of the illusion.
Chris: What?
Spike: The funny part is the illusion itself. The serious part is behind that—the illusion's control. Its energy and its creator.
Chris: You wrote the story.
Spike: Wrong, at this moment I am writing the story. I know that in my memory. I do it in the present, in the electricity of my cells, right on this stupid dot.
Chris: The period. Now I would prefer to return either to the religious experience I have had recently or to some of the sexual episodes earlier on, some of that fine oral sex.
Spike: Sorry but you have to help me decide a serious question.
Chris: You mean, "Is the Novel Dead?"

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Spike: Certainly you can say that. It means nothing. It's not dead certainly and on the other hand it was hardly ever really a living organism. It is sort of a parasite resting in the flux between you and me, in the illusion's energy.

Chris: I would like some of that fucking back soon. Even in words, fucking is better than anything else.

Spike: That's one point: of view. Which is lost in a maze of points. Fucking is good, that is a point. If the novel is dead or not dead, that is a piece of nonsense useful only to chew around in the ceremony of the classroom. To discuss its "death" is certainly not even a "practise" let alone a point.

Chris: I would like to say that the specks have begun to rage in my chest, four hundred New Yorkers falling down ... neutrinos corpses dust bullets hit rotting democracy specks and new words, each word a bit of new ink, each linked into sad dashboards across the page, a holy child.

Spike: Each holy child is indeed a new word. But the question, the question. I need your help in formulating the best question.

Chris: What is it?

Spike: That's the problem.

Chris: That was a question.

Spike: How do you feel?

Chris: A long distance in my flesh. I feel like a fool with a youth attached. Something to wear money on, to send children into institutions, into battle with some steel and some little wit. I feel like you move your pencil.

Spike: The problem is: you can feel. I can feel you feel. The problem is there is a bomb here made out of left-overs.

Chris: I have no thing to do.

Spike: Right.

Chris: But there is something here.

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This ends tape.

Chris did not hear his own voice when he came onto the tape. He was in the shower, singing a little song to himself, washing the crud off his tired body and feeling better. Then the character of Chris is played by No One In Particular. The character of Mr. Mace was played by a bitter load of vibrations carried in specks from one vibration pack to another, like wild, foaming dogs let loose on their own graves, spitting up tokens and passing in exchange. The character of Noel was played by A Girl In Particular. The character of the oriental bartender was played by A Nation. The character of No One In Particular was played by the almighty Will.

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Kenward Elmslie

Halloween Loop

awaiting arrest
sky-high nonchalance
walk on by (off orange girder)

comely comedy
construction workers agog
they laugh: hey Mack

their helmets
(my new charm device: *sera sera*)
silver streaks against the black

night now
someone's drug death's my doing
my umpty-umpth dream murder

warm day
metal shop grills clank open
along the Medit... the Pacif...

frontal horror
"most people are dead on their feet"
turn page

it's Edwin Denby
Ronsard and I must part forever
it's that kind of wrap-around age

yank off all the knobs
well all reet!
nod off, nod off, as if—as if—

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Tom Clark

A Sailor's Life

Whatever interest
there was in
difference's gone.

★

She rolls the sounds
around and around.

A piece of speech
falls out of her mouth.

★

"A peace
of speech,"

says Ginsberg.

★

Like the Big Note
of which all music
is the resonance
is the poetic sentence.

★

You're a piece
of the same person
I'm a piece of.

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Who is Lewis?
Who is Joanne?

*

What'd Ed Sanders
call Bolinas—
a psychedelic
Peyton Place?

*

"The locale of this book is
California, and the Californian
will find much in it that is
familiar to him; the characters,
however, are imaginary, as are the
situations; and, in one instance,
a whole neighborhood."

*

The "Democratic
Response" to
Nixon's
State of the Union
Message—

Speaker of the House
McCormick,
80
years of age,
can't read
his lines
on the teleprompter.

*

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Other
places to go—

Aspen
Santa Fe
San Diego

(Go ride the music).

*

My wife's
birthday—
February
5th.

*

Visitors
in 1969:

too many
to name.

*

After the rain

camellias
bloom too soon.

*

half silver
half black
eucalyptus leaf

*

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2 from STRANGE DUDES

Imitation of Ted

Suede vest
over blue sweater
over brown shirt
& tough white chest.

When a man's
in love,

he's riding high above
whoever'll hold still for it.

Imitation of Ron

Betty!
To touch your cunt
in the car—was this
too much to ask?

Did you have to break
all the fingers of my right hand?

*

Virginia Slims
Jimmy Miller

*

"Turn My Life Down"—
that was

last summer—playing
on the radio again now.

*

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By the sea,
by the sea,
by the beautiful
sea

*

Reading the California
poets—Rexroth,
Patchen, and Meltzer.

*

Spent this winter
thinking, writing,
getting sick, and
watching basketball.

*

My one strength—
my women
are behind me.

*

tape
loop

pop the tab
pinch the roach

*

"Because everything flows in the direction
of least resistance, and because the heat
to the south was too great and likewise
the cold to the north, the least resistant
direction was approximately west"

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★

satellite photos
of the weather
as God sees it
& easy does it

★

follow the downstream flow
to the store—difficult
hitchhiking—the winter
of Charles Manson

★

Q. (TV reporter): "Doing better today?"
A. (Manson): "Always doing good—everyday's better."

★

finding
a 4-leaf clover
in the grass

Bill's Erik
Satie
notebook

★

KMPX plays
"Peace Piece"
by Bill Evans

★

Planet News

★

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O Speech, tell me if
our brothers and sisters—
the other breathers—
are safe in here with us.

★

A place where
the time of year
is a color—
dark green.

★

Favorite songs
of 1969:
"Wooden Ships"
and
"A Sailor's Life".

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Tom Disch

Joyful Feelings

The Joyful Feelings met you as
Yesterday emerged from the tiny windows
outside Tiffany's My rough
estimate would be a ton & of the silver
a second ton Happiness can't help
making so little sense since
Eroticism replaced the other philosophies in A.D. 180
despite or perhaps even because of
our Embarkation More than a week ago
from Athens from Naples & from Rome who
still commands every Luxury of the Mediterranean
as we command each other's wandering
Attention Until the bullion almost dwarfs
the Fragments of Petronius & the vast Capitoline
itself according to a Variant
form of the legend Immortalized
by the inspired brush of was it Fragonard

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Robert Creeley

An Illness

The senses of one's
life begin
to fade. Rather,

I ask, who is the man
who feels he
thinks he knows.

I had felt
the way accumulated,
coming from that past,

a prospect beckoned, like
the lovely
nineteenth century. Women

one grew up to
then were there.
Even the smallest

illness changes
that. I saw you
stop, a moment.

The hospital
was a pitiful
construct and

a scaffolding upset
all dignity of
entrance, somehow.

But now it's rather
the people I sat with
yesterday. Across from me

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a young woman, dark
haired, and in
her eyes much dis-

traction, and fear. The
other one I
remember was also

young, a man, with
lovely eyes, a greyish
blue. He was

struck by what
we were
hearing, a voice,

on a tape, of an
old friend, recently dead.
Have you noticed

the prevalence
of grey blue eyes?
Is it

silly, somehow,
so to see them?
Your breasts

grow softer now
upon their
curious stem. In

bed I yearn
for softness, turning
always to you. Don't,

one wants to cry,
desert me. Have I
studied

all such isolation
just to
be alone?

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Robinson Crusoe
is a
favorite book. I thought

it was a true one.
Now I find
I wonder. Now

it changes. Do you
know that line
that speaks of music

fading up a woodland
path? Or is it
a pasture

I have in mind?
I remember pastures
of my childhood but

I will not
bore you with their
boulders and cows.

Rather those smells,
and flowers—
the lady slippers,

all the quiet darkness
of the woods. Where
have I come to,

who is here. What
a sad cry
that seems, and I

reject it. On
and on. And many,
many years, one

thinks, remain.
Tremulous, we
waver, here. We

love all
worlds we
live in.

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Peter Schjeldahl

Ho Chi Minh Elegy

Ho Chi Minh was our real President
The one we counted on
For right decisions

His face enthralled us:
Confidential, Oriental, clear
As a passage of music

He was always himself

He held in his thoughts
The immensity of these times
Cradled in his sense of what was fit

He smoked Salems, you know
Think for what else he might have liked us
Had he not been obliged to wage war
To give us ourselves and our future

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Veni, Vidi... Wendt

Richard Stern

I

From Los Angeles to Santa Barbara, a paradisal coast bears the permanent exhaust of the automobile: shack towns, oil pumps, drive-ins, Tastee-Freeze bars, motels, service stations. At Ventura, the coast turns a corner which sends the Santa Ynez mountains east-west and lets the sun hang full on the beaches for its long day. A hundred yards or so off the highway there are a few sandy coves almost free of coastal acne. One of them, a mile north of a red boil of tourism called Santa Claus, is Serena Cove. A wooden plaque over the single-gauge railroad tracks gives the name. Cross the track to a Cyclone fence. Behind that, in a lemon grove, is an amber villa shaped like a square head with glass shoulders. This is the Villa Leone, for which our place was the Changing House. (The villa has been turned into apartments.) Our house was—is—low, white and gabled. It has one grand room windowed on three sides, three bedrooms, a kitchen, and three bathrooms, of which two function. It is hidden by odorous bushes, palms, live oaks and great, skin-colored eucalypti, some of whose sides have been gashed by lightning. A wall of honeysuckle ends the driveway; behind it, the south lawn leads thirty feet to a red-dirt bluff covered with vines threaded with tiny blue flowers. They hang to the beach, a half-mile scimitar of bright ivory sand. Three other houses, hidden from ours by palms and trellises, share the beach rights. You see them from the water, glassy monocles snooting it over a subdued sea.

Actually not the sea, but the Santa Barbara Channel

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which is formed by the great private islands visible only on very clear summer days. The islands are far enough away to preserve a sense of the sea, but, like a lido, they break waves down to sizes which keep you from worrying about small children.

We were there ten summer weeks, in the last five of which I wrote the first version of an opera. I've never had an easier, less-forced time, and although, now, back in Chicago, I see that what I did there on the coast was not much more than take out the ore. I now have to build the factory and make the opera. At the time, though, I didn't know it. During these weeks I never turned back to see what I'd done. Day after day I coasted (yes), writing away, feeling the music and story come with an ease which, till then, I'd never known.

Everyone seems to know that opera is on its last legs. In fact, music itself isn't doing too well. A fine song writer, Ned Rorem, says that the Beatles are the great music of our time; I suppose they are more inventive than most. Our best composers spend a lot of time stewing about audience-teasing and other art-world claptrap. Only Stravinsky seems like a wise inventor who happens to use music instead of words or mathematics. And he is enjoyed more as a Dr. Johnson than as an enchanting musician. A man like me who's spent himself writing a musical drama is led to feel his work has no public significance, that, at best, it will be endured by a few friends and an occasional audience bribed by free tickets and a party in honor of the composer. ("Honor" because he endured the long boredom of working out what bores them only an hour or two.) An "enforced loss of human energy," wrote Mr. Khrushchev about armaments. Of course, writing music is not enforced, though one must pass time doing something. And music is a few wrongs up from armaments.

Though down from political action, as the hierarchy of 1968 had it; and I was influenced by such mis-estimates as well as by my inner tides. I lent a very small public name and an equivalent public gift to the better-known victims of institutional brutality. Last spring I marched in the Loop, collected fourteen draft cards, made a speech in the rain by a

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Meštrovič Indian, was photographed, televised, went home to look at myself on the local news, and had bad hours waiting for the FBI to turn me into the local Dr. Spock. In short, paid the debt to my consciousness of being in so frivolous a trade.

On the one hand, I dream of my own Bayreuth, the Wendt Festival, with, not mesmerism and fruited myth, but classical wisdom and common sense made engaging and novel by the least duplicitous of contemporary musical lines. On the other hand, I feel the shame of luxury, of a large—rotting—house, of privacy and silence, of a livable salary and easy schedule, of an entrée into the little circles in which I whirl—college music departments, two-day festivals in Mexico City and The Hague, occasional mention in a news magazine's music section.

For this opera, which, with luck, will be given a truncated radio performance in Stockholm and a workshop run-through in Bloomington, Indiana, I'm trying to do, I suppose, what writers do in prefaces (or what my Uncle Herman did fifty years ago as advance agent for Barnum). I'm writing an account of its genesis or composition to serve as a kind of a trailer (which, as usual, precedes what it "trails").

Any thoughtful man who types the solitary "I" on the page as much as I have these past weeks must consider its perils. This is a great time for "I." Half the works billed as fiction are just spayed (or Styrofoamed) memoirs. This week's literary sections are on Malraux's *Anti-Memoirs*, apparently an unravelable mixture of real and fictive "I"s, pseudonyms, *noms de plume* and *noms de guerre*, mixed in with fictional guises and life roles (in which "the man" tells Nehru that he is a "Minister of State" the way that Mallarmé's *cat* becomes *Mallarmé's* cat). I suppose this need to multiply oneself is another of the disguises of libido. (Professor Lederberg found gender in bacteria; perhaps gravity itself will turn out to be the lust of particles for each other.)

That genius Nietzsche, whom I still read in a Modern Library Giant bought at fifteen after reading Will Durant's *Story of Philosophy*... No, I'll begin again; I'm not writing

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autobiography. Nietzsche asks, "Aren't books written precisely to hide what is in us?" Granting the exceptional concealments of his time, isn't this still the case? I know the authors of some of the frankest books ever written. The books are mostly trailers or self-advertisements, letters to women saying, "Here I am, come get me," or to parents saying, "This is the marvelous reason for my condition." Or sometimes, they're just brilliant drugs of self-assurance.

Every book conceals a book. But as the great old fellow (F.N.) says, every thinker is more afraid of being understood than misunderstood. Wants uniqueness more than love and gratitude.

In Nietzsche's day, the pose was to be *simply* grand, in our time, to be *complexly* grand. The good artists I know are more credulous than *smarter* people. (So you hear stories of their naïveté or—its other face—mean shrewdness.)

Writing your own story, you can report, pose, and judge all at once. Not as blissful a cave as music, but not bad at all.

So here's my little *Enstehung des Walpole's Love* (*Opus 43*), the yet-to-be-finished opera. I pray it's not a substitute for it. (In fact, I'm willing to send a Xerox of fifty pages of score to anyone who sends ten dollars and a self-addressed, stamped, return envelope to Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 383 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

(*Owing to personnel changes in our office, Mr. Wendt's invitation must be considered null and void. H., R. and W.*)

2

I don't begin at the beginning, but with my then seventeen-year-old son, Jeff-U. (For Ulrich; I'm Jeff-C, for Charles. Ulrich is the great-uncle from whom I inherited not the two hundred thousand I expected, but fifty.) Oedipal miseries were, I thought, ruining my summer. They were at their worst when Jeff-U invited his friend Ollendorf to stay with us.

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I was not anxious to have Ollendorf around. The presence of an outsider inhibits me, if only for a time and from walking around in my skin. Though notches up from the loudmouthed adolescent ignoranti who fill up our Chicago house, he would be extra presence, an absence of dear absence; he'd be swinging baseball bats against the vases, tackling Jeff-U into Sackerville's stereo; I'd be forking over six hundred for that in addition to the hundred and eighty-five it cost me every week just to hook our trunks up in Sackerville's place. (Which turned out to be Donloubie's place.)

I did not want him.

But there was small recourse: Gina, my almost sixteen-year-old, had had her amical quota with Loretta Cropsey.

I laid it on the hard line. "He can come if you, One, specify dates: ten days and not an hour more; and Two, he's got to fly into Santa Barbara, which means the three-thirty out of San Francisco. And Arrival Day counts as Day Number One."

Since Jeff-U daily stretched his six and a sixth feet of unemployed body upon a bed from one A.M. to one P.M., it didn't strike me that Ollendorf's afternoon arrival constituted an important loss of a vertical day. "Besides which, it takes half an hour to get to the airport. And before that you'll have to work your way into a T-shirt. Even shoes. Maybe even a pair of socks. Not matched or clean, of course, but you can see, there's more Ollendorf to the day than his arrival at the house." (Not that Jeff-U wore the same piece of clothing three consecutive hours. Except for dress shirts, which I told him to pay for himself. Since which the San Ysidro Laundry had been deprived of his custom.)

It turned out I won't let him pick up Ollendorf anyway because (1) he could drive only our New Yorker, Sackerville limiting the Volkswagen to "licensed adults," and (2) "I'm not going to burn a quart of fuel to fetch your effing pal when I'm up at Goleta anyway." (I rehearse the chamber group Mondays.)

He wished to telephone Ollendorf. "Sixty-five cents won't kill you."

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"*Kill me*?"

"I paid for most of the calls."

"Not the tax."

"Here's a buck," fingering the besanded back pocket of the early-afternoon pants for one of the crushed bills which remain from spring poker triumphs and his grandmother's indolent generosity—substitute for the physical birthday presents which would force her into the dangerous byways of Fifth Avenue.

I take the buck. "This covers about ten percent of them." If it's but a week of weeding nasturtiums or washing windows, I am bent on seeing his hairless arse erect before one P.M. Without myself having to chain and toss it into the local office of the California State Employment Service.

Of course, he knows what I'm about, knows I bait him, but though down to fourteen bucks (if I haven't overlooked some of the pockets or the change which overflows to every couch and bed in the house), he throws me another bill. Which I don't make him pick up or unroll; because if his theatrical arrogance caused him to toss a five instead of a one, he will be down to nine bucks. (I didn't unroll it until I was in the john; I have theatrical bouts as well. It was, unfortunately, a single.)

3

Every other weekend, the cove fills with the landbound children of my Los Angeles relatives and summer colleagues. (Especially those unable to keep progenitive tools from progenitive work: George Mullidyne has six, the odious Davidov has pumped five into the beauteous Patricia, and even the emeritous Krappell manages to churn junior Krappells out of his third wife.) They turn one half-mile of beach into an anvil.

I buy twenty-four cans of pop at a crack; they don't last an afternoon. The be-Pepsied urine threatens the brim of

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the channel and, for all I know, brings on the underground coronaries which the *News-Press* attributes to "settling of the channel fault." The last of these, 4.5 on the Richter scale, had our chairs leaping around for half a minute, and, up the coast, severed an oil pipe which poured a hundred thousand lethal gallons over the lobster beds of Gaviota. (Note: Winter '69, after the rig across the way leaked millions, I hadn't seen anything.) But I found a local grease called Gorner's which looked but didn't taste like pop. Two giant bottles last a week. (The better mousetrap.)

Three days after I made the first sketches for *Walpole's Love*, my Aunt Jo, her son, Sammy, and his three children, Little Lance, Indian-colored Sabrina, and my favorite, the Golden Triangle, Mina, drove up from L.A.

Sammy's a cetologist at La Jolla. He spends his life in a bathing suit taping the conversation of whales in the green-and-silver tanks of the Marine Biology Laboratory. Whales, it seems, are the wisest of creatures, fearless, sensitive, cooperative. They tend their distressed kind, nudge them to the surface, and skim their pallid flanks for circulation. (Such stuff goes well in Santa Barbara, where the daughter of Thomas Mann used to escort a dog she taught to type to parties where parakeets supposedly chirp *Traviata*.) In such pursuits, Sammy has grown whalish himself. A pink cigar of a man, he rolls out of his Squire Wagon with children, mother, and fly rods. (At the service of the deep during the week, on weekends he murders there.)

Mina is Jeff-U's age. Two strips of psychedelic cloth hang on five and a half feet of intoxicating flesh. Her vitaminized breasts are those of Hungarian spies; her golden triangle—how I imagine its secretive fur—her pure, thick lips, her winking invitations to the ball I think are meant for me. I have seen her beauty spill over since sixty-four. Even then, she was ready, lolitable. (We watched that film together on the late show. How she understood.) But then there was Wilma Kitty (wife and children waited economically in Chicago), I had less reason to act out Nabokov's dreamlife. But while the earth gnashed hot jaws under channel waters

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and the Impulse to Lobsterhood searched new stuff, I dreamed madly of opening Mina's Northwest Passage. (One day, driving her east, to Grinnell or to Penn State; at dusk, by Winnemucca, Nev., or Provo, U., we pull into a desert motel, we swim, Mina, you and I, in a silver pool and come back dripping to our cabin, brassy droplets on our golden flesh. Silent, regarding, we strip wet suits—I have lost ten or fifteen more pounds, my pectorals are weight-lifted into buttresses of depilated chest—you walk to me—no, turn from me, flipping suit from ankle, I pull your back to my front, Hungarian breasts within my palms, and you, struggling for me, go belly-down upon the double bed, glorious snow-white rearward twins aquiver for the locomotive rod.)

Aunt Jo is gray, gap-toothed, powdery, hard of hearing, repetitive, with our family appetite for the fortissimo monologue. When she, her sisters, and her surviving brother, my father, the Optimist, assemble, it looks as if an Eastern rice village on stilts has been given life. (All are on canes.) They enter, four octogenarians with octogenarian spouses. (The spouses, except my father's, are all second mates: this family survives. Survives and kills.) They surround the children with their gifts, old arms, and puckering lips. "Open, darling, open and see what Aunt Jo [Belle, May] has brought her precious." They vomit triumph, praise, self-adoration. All is right with the world. (Why not? It has endured them.) The cities they inhabit are crimeless, the water pure, the streets immaculate, their children extraordinary, known over New York, Scarsdale, the world, on the verge or aftermath of incredible deals—mentioned in *Textile Week*—their grandchildren are peerless beauties of rare and promising shrewdness. The gashes of their lives (children dead in auto accidents, bankrupt sons, psychotic grandchildren, doomed conditions, stymied lives) are scarred over with such noise. They stagger into the living room, drop into sofas, and, huge voices aimed at the room's imagined center, begin their simultaneous, uninterruptible spiels. Canes gaveling carpets for emphasis and control, voices crashing against each other, they solicit, they demand recognition of their life performances.

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Only one mortal thing can suspend their arias: Food. Velia's thin, West Hartford voice inserts, "Would you like a bite?" Convulsion of struggle, sofa arms crushed, canes gripped to bone, the gravity of sagged flesh reversed by visions of repast. And commences the Long March to the table. There, stunned moment of formality, who will sit where? Velia leaves them struggling—monarchical whales—but appetite dissolves precedence, they fall to, moaning about the splendor of the vittles; though their old hearts are sunk at the thin New England provision, the cellophaned corned beef, the thin, pre-sliced rye bread staled in the Protestant markets which magnetize Velia, and, for sweets, dry wafers in lieu of the thick snail curls of raisins, nuts, and caramelized dough, or the scarlet tarts, the berries swillingly augmented by terrific syrups. No, nothing is right, but then how should a thin-nosed aristocrat know what keeps old Jews alive? Mouths liquid, they compliment, and so enrich, the sober fare. They live, they eat; the juices flood. This is what ancestral migrations have aimed at. (Children of the Book? Yes, quick. Sons and Daughters of the Schnecken, the Custard Tart.)

Aunt Jo and I sit in Sackerville's beautiful living room, Japanese-free of furniture, windows on three sides, in front, the flowered lawn, enpalmed, honeysuckled, grassed to the great bluff over the ocean. The noise is of bird and wave, the Pacific is blue, snowy. Aunt Jo takes my arm, pulls herself up by it so that her lips are at my ear. In a voice that is part puzzlement, part revelation, she says, "The Lord has been good to you, Jeffrey."

The gap-toothed, powdery, great-nosed face tosses back toward the drained cans of pop, the scarlet paradise flowers, the spread and noise of children, and what?—the pretty, apparently undemanding, apparently giving wife. She remembers the commissions from Tanglewood and Fromm, the write-ups in *Time* (three harsh slaps), the full-fledged attack by Winthrop Sargeant ("The complex aridity of Wendt's music, commissioned, composed, performed and —hopefully—buried in the academy") which she has read as

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professional compliment. And this is all set in the ocean-cooled, semi-tropic poster-dream of paradise.

"Things *look* good out here, Aunt Jo."

We both know that childhood friends are dead in the wars, drunk, bankrupt, or, at best, anonymous. She knows the deceptions of the present, this powdery old aunt whose first husband died returning a crosscourt volley from her sexagenarian racket and whose second was struck by a Yellow Cab as he hurried to her summons at Madison and Seventy-Second Street.

I press the skin bag under her elbow and lead her where lawn and bluff meet in the line of insane-looking palms (spiky umbrellas, vegetable porcupines). On the beach below, dowitchers snap beaks for red beach ants, waves flush iron gleams. (Their metric genius is something I try and try to figure and employ.)

I hand Aunt Jo into a rattan chair, squat beside her ropy legs, and keep my ear alive. I am figuring a sequence.

Yes, for the other night, after a dismal sixteen months in which my only opus was a setting of Definitions from Hoare's *Shorter Italian-English Dictionary* For Wind Instruments, Radio Static and Audience Coughs—I tried to be of the brave new laboratory-world, and it crippled me—mooning on the beach, watching the murderous oil rigs lit like rubies in the channel, I hit upon Something Grand. Out of the Blue. And, while Velia snored in the double bed, I sat at Sackerville's cypress work table and sketched the plan, laid down the lines, established a tone row, and worked it all up around a story.

Yes, the opera. In this day and age, surrounded by aleatory gamesmen, vatic pasticheurs of Mozart, phony pholkistes, electronic adolescents, employers of blow-torchers, Caged mice, and concrete crapistes, I fell into this antique pit.

And it's no surrealist cop-out, no twigged-out Clarsic (*Carmini Catulli* or miserable Yeats play with less action than a cigarette ad), no neo-Wagnerian *Geschwätz* but something new, fresh, off the morning paper. Urban dew. In brief, the story's about a police sergeant and a black hooker he woos with precinct and other stories. In particular with the old

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eighteenth-century story—he's a nightschool reader—of the icy bachelor Horace Walpole, blind old Mme. Du Deffand who loved him hopelessly, and then, decades later, young Mary Berry, whom the old Walpole loved and who milked him of his wit and knowledge as he had milked the old Deffand. Girl and cop conjure between them the characters, who show up on scrims, on screen, and on the stage (like the Czechs). The musical lines drift with the actors, or, like motifs, fade into other time schemes. No dominant style (the sign of this century), no batting the company into shape. Deffand sounds like Scarlatti and J. C. F. Bach, Walpole like Haydn and early Beethoven, Berry like Beethoven and early Wagner, the sergeant like Arnold Pretty-mount, Igor the Penman, my dear Webern (the musical laser) plus a bit of Elliot C. and Pierre B.; the hooker will swim in every love song, east and west, that can squeeze into the tone row. Yet the lines are never to blur, there are but chordal shadows round the sparse, informative line.

"Sam found marijuana in her drawer last week."

"What?"

Aunt Jo waved at a gold twig in the blue water. Mina on a mattress. "She said everyone takes it."

"Foolish, foolish. Hardly started, they want life to have italics."

"Maybe if you speak to her, Jeffrey. She respects you, you're the artist in the family, she thinks it's wonderful to have a famous cousin." (Aunt Jo received one of the ten *Who's Who in Americas* my mother bought the year I joined the Kansas morticians and General Electric VPs.)

Gravel scutters—my sequence is long gone—a car pulls in the driveway. A gray Bentley. Must be a mistake. No.

Donloubie.

Donloubie is the owner of Sackerville's place. He has come on a mission, foolish and remote as himself.

"Murder."

Two days before, this golden corner had suffered its first Caucasian murder in ten years. Donloubie's neighbor, Mrs.

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Joel, the candy-maker's wife, was found under the closed lid of a heated swimming pool (ten yards above the Pacific).

Donloubie is hunched, muscular, immensely rich, is said to own much of Columbus, Georgia, his wife a goodly portion of Jacksonville, Florida. The Santa Barbara story is they met and married to stretch their demesnes until they touched. Mrs. Donloubie has contrived the Theory of Three. The week before, Slochum, a broker, was found at the foot of stone stairs in a pool of his blood. Now Lydia Joel. "Who'll be the third?" ask the Donloubies. (Slochum was drunk, fell and broke his own neck.) The Donloubies tremble. They alert housemaids and chauffeurs to departure. But can they depart? Their neighbor has been found floating in eighty-five-degree water, gray head bashed with unknown instrument. They cannot flee the coop, despite the fabulous tracts of Florida and Georgia which underwrite their Bentleys and their orchid garden.

Donloubie comes to his tenant's tenant. I am a University Professor, the only one he has ever known. The University conjures up for him the investigation of exotic fauna. Can I suggest a way of getting sophisticated sleuths into the case past the befogged, bungling local officers? "Perhaps your criminologists up there." He means the University of California at Santa Barbara. Doesn't he know I am as remote as can be from university life, that I am a summer-quarter visitor, that I know no one but two colleagues in the music department and a few student instrumentalists and composers-in-the-egg? The Donloubies have lawyers, brilliant manipulators of their tax returns and real-estate transactions. Is he afraid to let them know his home touches a house of violence, that he himself has been questioned by police?

Donloubie appears on our—his, Sackerville's—lawn with his Japanese chauffeur who carries a tremendous basket of fruit. Nectarines, peaches, plums, Kadota figs, Persian melons, a pair of golden scissors ageless within a dark grapple of dates. Aunt Jo rises in tribute to this gorgeous heap. Donloubie, unknown to her a minute earlier, has *sur le champ* become a Personage of Note, a future embellishment of her

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litany of triumph. She receives him, I am sent for a chair and shout Jeff-U off the Angel Baseball Game to fetch it. (Argument coagulates in his long face. He is invited to stay, his social charm contrives important business with the National Broadcasting Company.)

Donloubie gives a nervous appraisal of this half-forgotten sliver of his holdings, frowns at an active sprinkler on the south lawn, an unshaven quality in the wall of honeysuckle —I see anew with his landowner's severe eye—but he is on deeper business, he hardly knows what. His gray-blond haycock, his reddish eyes, his sixty years of salted tan, his beauteous chestnut sport coat and fifty-dollar Charvet shirt command the lawn.

Did I know, he begins, that Mrs. Joel had had eight housekeepers since the first of January, that she was a vicious, half-mad woman, that Mr. Joel, slavish in devotion though he was, was on the verge of having her committed, that he had begged him, Donloubie, to keep an eye out on her while he, Joel, gallivanted. Yes, indeed, and the blond cock tossed but did not—a wig?—waver in the air, old Joel had greater interest than in, ha-ha, Tootsie Rolls; for a man of seventy-six, Joel was in—if the Missus will excuse the phrase—terrific sexual form, that if he, Donloubie, were not an old acquaintance—not friend, mind you—and had he not received a call from the man at the very time the miserable woman was having her head beaten in, he, Donloubie, would look very closely at Mr. Joel's whereabouts.

Fascinating, but where do I fit in?

—Well, I thought you ought to know, for one thing. I feel responsible, as your, (pause) host.

Very nice, but isn't—

Yes, perhaps, but I was from a city where they—as it were—specialized in murder, and therefore, surely, in its investigation. Then, too, I was in contact at the University with all sorts of knowledgeable types. He was not entirely persuaded about local competence in these matters, and since he and Mrs. D. were friends of the deceased, if one could be a friend of a totally disagreeable woman who so antagonized

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her servants that they dropped off like leaves—though, oddly, the present housekeeper, a rather genteel woman, by the by, had stayed more than three months—at any rate, as neighbors, friends, and, too, as people who both were obligated elsewhere yet felt they could not leave until at least the preliminary matters were cleared up, they wanted to bring in proper investigators. I, surely, or, at least, *perhaps*, could help them find someone, either in Chicago or at the University.

Strange, but it was a glorious basket of fruit, the man did not summon me to write a dirge for the dead woman—I was once offered such a commission, as if my lyric mathematics could serve an antique ritual—the man was clearly anxious to talk, yet nervous about talking to Mrs. Erwin or any of the very few locals he deigned to talk to, or who deigned to talk with him. It wasn't clear how Donloubie—strange name—perhaps a Creole—came to own Columbus, Georgia (if he did). And it occurred to me then and there that his wealth was squeezed out of young girls' thighs and bloody needles in the port streets of Marseilles and Genoa, and that he was damn scared the dumb locals might dig up this history, that even the local rag would publish it, and that, who knows, he would have to give up the Pacific villa he'd chosen to live and die in. I had better try out those dates on the neighbors' cat.

"The Missus and I would like you and yours to come for a drink this evening."

Sorry, pressure of society—we are invited to a party—ditto tomorrow—no party—but he is unstoppable. "Monday, then."

"Splendid."

Aunt Jo shines with solution. "Jeffrey, call the FBI."

Donloubie's tan fingers sink to the basket of fruit, grip a melon, raise and jam it against the dates. "Missus. Donloubie learned to dial a phone some years ago."

The cock of hair waves, the red-pit eyes shiver, the mustard sport coat and hundred-dollar beige slacks rise from the rattan. "See you Monday, Professor. A strategy session."

"I'll be there, Mr. D., don't worry."

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"Donloubie don't worry, Professor."

"And thanks for the fruit."

"Enjoy it in health. Good day, Missus."

The chauffeur is spun from the house, where he and Jeff-U have divided the misery of the California Angels.

I too have had it, the breathy clucks of the old aunt, the local bloodshed, the noise rising up the bluff. "Aunt Jo, will you excuse me a bit? I've got to," and left hand is up to tap the hair above the ear. The Composer's Aunt understands.

Past Jeff-U and cleaning Velia into the bedroom, where the Muse has stripped her toga, and where, conjuring up the golden body of the impossible cousin, the composer pours generative sap across Sackerville's rough sheets.

The Party

That is, a select company invited to participate in some form of amusement.

Tonight's amusement: musical assassination.

The company: Davidov and Mullidyne, the University musicologists and their wives; Donald Taylor, my old sidekick from Hindemith's Harmony Class at New Haven; and invited, but not attending, a Montenegrin serialist employed by the Disney Studios; Mme. Hortense Reilly, local alto and graduate of Mme. Lotte Lehmann's Santa Barbara master classes; and Benedict Krappell, sociologist, emeritus, whose musical credentials were playing double bass for Damrosch in the twenties to support—his words—his academic habit.

The inviter/selector: Franklin B. Ritt, an ex-Morgan, Stanley broker and active Patron of the Arts whom I'd met in a Spanish museum five years ago and with whom I have been semi-annually afflicted ever since. (Ritt takes no planes, and stops off in Chicago changing trains.)

The ostensible purpose of the gathering was to introduce me to the musical high life of the area. As I already knew Mullidyne, Davidov, Krappell, and Donald Taylor, that left

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the Montenegrin, Miss Reilly, and Mrs. Ritt. Or, as it worked out, Mrs. Ritt, a woman of either great discretion or puissant ignorance. Between "I'm so glad at last" and "So sorry your wife," she said not a word.

Of course, in such company, it didn't show.

"They all know your work," said Ritt in telephonic invitation. Stunned by this rare celebrity, I did not sufficiently examine the reticence of the verb.

Velia does not take much stock in human variety and seldom goes to parties. Besides, her small capacity was exhausted by the Angeleno Wendts. "I'm not going. It'll be one more hellish evening cutting down every absent musician in the world."

This is not my line. An exception to the celebrated viciousness of my fellow craftsmen, a good piece from them gets a loud cheer from me. "Perhaps La Mullidyne will have some tidings about psychotic blackies, and you can feel at home."

"That's sweet talk in front of Gus." (Gus is fathoms deep in a game of solitaire.)

"I said we'd be there at nine. The party's in our honor."

"Your honor."

"I regret the dependent state of the second sex, Velia, but you'll have to play along with it till the kindergartners have had their day. You can star tonight: you're two thousand miles closer to hot gossip than they."

"I don't feel like starring. I don't feel like going."

I fear—to the point of idolatry—the unreason of women. "Come on, Vee, it'll put color in your cheeks."

"If I'm so pale, I'd better not show myself. I don't want to humiliate you."

The bee's suicidal aggression is one of the pathetic drives of nature. And poor Vee's.

La pauvre femme n'est pas méchante
Elle souffre, tu sais, d'une détente.

This in the bathroom getting on a maroon turtleneck (cotton, to spare myself in heat and pocket) and California sport coat, a rose-and-magenta plaid. Large teeth white in the

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sunlit skin, blue-black eyes, remnants of black hair, I conjure irresistibility out of the mirror. Though who'll be there to resist? Draggy crones, perhaps one with splendid legs and chest, a wrinkled Frau Musicologue who'll drop her lip my way and, *piano piano*, "Call, I'm in the book."

To Jeff-U, in his sixth straight hour before the enchanted glass: "Get your arse erect and go play Casino with Mom." Rage and disdain darken his long face. "I thought you were going to read *The Possessed*. A whole month, and you're still in Part One. Gina read *Martin Chuzzlewit* in two days, she's halfway through *Children of Sanchez*, and you can't fight your way off Page Sixty-Five."

"I don't feel like reading."

"So write. I bought you that notebook for graduation."

"Whyn't you get off my back?"

"Oh, that's lovely filial talk. Once more, and I'll whack the indolence off your bony hide."

Jeff-U is mortified by skinniness. Strong and good-looking, he feels he has to knock everybody dead with perfection. Horrific vanity of adolescence. Now and then I look at Erikson or some other Guide to Life's Hard Stages, and muzzle my particular fury in generic analysis. Not tonight. "You get no backtalk from NBC. No criticism, no testing. That's the source of your infatuation with that machine," and I slap the button which blanks the screen. Jeff-U continues staring at it. "*Amour-impropre*. Your mind'll sink so snake-low it'll be unable to rise. You'll perish an idiot. A McLuhanite bum. And looka the mess here." Moated by a carton of orange sherbet, the butts of four frankfurters, a quarter-filled bowl of tuna fish (he never finishes anything), pear cores, two cans of Pepsi (he must have bought them himself). "What a spectacular bloom of human culture."

"Good ni-ight, Dad," D gliding to B flat. Softening my heart, transposing the exchange. A dear boy, wiser than his savage pa, and no power-mad know-it-all, no instant-revolutionary, pimpled Robespierre-shrieker, no louse-ridden Speed-lapper, hardly a drinker (innocent fifth of vermouth in his closet, beer to fatten up), not even a bad driver. Only

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vanity, sloth, and narcissism blot him. "All right. Take it easy," and I pull out the button of the magic casement.

Why does the party count? I suppose for the musical jaws within which lay Patricia Davidov.

Another tale of Middle-Class Adultery (Genus: The Academy; Species: Music). Human beings have comparatively few ways to express themselves. We swim in a sexual sea, we measure our affective lives by sexuality. Patricia Davidov was the yeast of *Walpole's Love*. Or, at least, what happened with her was partial expression of what it also partially expressed.

She was there, a long, golden, big-boned woman, and across from her, the dark-faced, sandal-wearing, tieless, white-toothed megaphone and music-hater, Davidov, author of *The Blindness of Donald Tovey, The Deafness of Ludwig Beethoven*. (Democratic hater of titles, Davidov removed Sir Donald's "Sir" and, ignorant lout, Beethoven's plebeian—Dutch—"van.") This dissertation, bound in the black spring binder which constituted its only public presence (i.e., it was never, could never be published, except by a vanity press, which Davidov's vanity would prevent his using), this dissertation graced my desk the entire summer and was returned in a manila envelope, unread, to Davidov's box. Unread, except for certain comic dip-ins, here and there, when this musical wild man lashed the finest noncomposer analyst in English or, yes, emptied the cerebral intestine which substituted for his neural matter upon the sublimities of Opera 109, 111 and 131. Davidov's egoism permitted him to struggle against only the greatest. (The drunkest punk takes on the greatest gun of the west. Except that Davidov had not been shot down, could not be, for he was down to begin with, could hardly have reached lower depths.)

We sat amidst Ritt's Collection. This fantastic assemblage of the abortions, blotches, and illegitimacies of grandeur needs a word. In Ritt's hillside house, an immense stucco-garage affair, this insanely penny-pinching prodigal had collected or piled every cut-rate piece of artistic junk his wide travels had brought him near. There were lithographs by

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the nephews of Matisse's nurse, oils not of Carracci but of Garraci, dreamscapes not by Redon but Virdon, abstractions done by imprisoned mensheviks, graffiti from Bombay streets, earrings fashioned from the teeth of Goering's schnauzer. The statistical improbability of so flawless a pile of criminal *merde* bespoke the kind of genius which marks California. With San Simeon the Franklin Ritt Collection is the prize of California *Schweinerei*.

In this setting, pictures smeared on walls, clumps of sculpture squatting by perhaps-ashtrays, within this prison of creative shit, there were its living voices, Davidov and his junior partner in crime, Francis Mullidyne, and their beautiful wives, one on each side of dear old Donald Taylor (tiny, bespectacled, timid celibate who had deserted the musical zoo for his antique shop in the Paseo and satisfied a scholarly itch by writing articles on eighteenth-century France). (It was his article on Madame Du Deffand which launched my libretto.)

The musicological jaws were biting the throats, ripping the flesh, and drinking the blood of every composer living and dead (with the conspicuously humiliating omission of J. R. C. Wendt). Within the hirsute, vibrant nostrils of Davidov, I read a terrible question: What somatic deficit kept Bach from the proper mode of human expression, murder? What sickness glued Einstein to his numbers, defrauded Shakespeare of dirk and pistol? Where had I gone wrong, squirting out musical sperm instead of poison?

Even Donald Taylor, minute, and cyclops-eyed behind fishbowl lenses, was forced from timidity to question the Davidovian Scheme of Musical *Schrecklichkeit*. "I don't follow that bit about Schubert, Bert."

Charmer Davidov responded that if it were a pair of tight male trousers, Donald would follow it close enough.

A company gasp, except for the impassive Venus whose Davidov-inoculation was renewed each night.

Into the gasp plunged the fury of Wendt. "You're a creep, Davidov. Why Ritt here trots you out as social decoration, I don't know, unless to let his guests enjoy a sight of the

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sewer. As for me, I've had it," and having calculated that a man with a mouth like Davidov's is probably at least the coward I am and that my extra fifty pounds and six inches will pacify if not tranquilize him, I get up, snarling.

Ritt mentions something about seeing his "latest buy," Donald Taylor says he guesses he'll come with me, Davidov manages, "Wait a mo'. Wait a mo' there, buddy. We gotta talk this thing out," two of the ladies are shivering too much to respond to my farewell nods, the other, the long golden obbligato to the malodorous Davidov, puckers and opens her lips in recognition of the farewell blast, perhaps divining that it was she as much as her husband who excited it.

The Bleeding Jellyfish, or Masters and Servants

with—for bows to antiquity and other concessionary spice—one epigraph from the saint of English humanism, Dr. S. Johnson:

"There is nothing, Sir, too little for so little a creature as man" (which has, with its hidden injunction to the objects of Gallupian inquisition to regard the recalcitrance of small things before blowing stacks of utopian fury, more force in the Age of Gallup than in Dr. J.'s hierarchical time) and, for musicians, another from A. Von Webern:

"Life, that is to say, the defense of a form."

The Persistence of Uoiichh

I

Eight A.M., slow getting started, not from Ritt's select company and bargain booze, but from sheer sludge of time, skeins of fat in blood, layers of surrender stacked in the passage from sleep to waking.

Up, on with shorts scissored from denims shrunk in the Carpinteria Laundro-Mat, I haul Gus off the morning car-

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toons and descend the three tiers of sixty-nine pine steps (only this morning do I notice the pretty mathematics) to the empty beach.

Gus: "You better not run onem pockmark things."

—Em pockmarks is bloodworms.

I avoid them, raise heavy, archless feet and clump up the beach trailed by Gus. When he senses a race and goes into high, my overreacher's need levers my gross pins, and I beat him by a mile. With frequent stops to assure him that I'm watching his progress, really to mute the hard pumping in my not quite unflabbed chest, the diaphragmatic tremor after deep breaths. This morning, I look round from one of my markers, a nude, fallen eucalyptus, and Gus is furiously waving me back, his stickpins flailing the terrific morning air. I lope back, Air-Rider Wendt. Gus, gorgeous, blue-eyed, big-mouthed head split between hysteria and joy, points me to his feet, where lies, sits, squats, a frightful purplish glob of what I would elsewhere take for the fecal deposit of a hippopotamus; or perhaps the aborted hippette itself (gluey within the placenta). Vomitous, wrinkled glob. Uoiichh.

—Look, Daddy, a jellyfish.

Shall such things live?

Closer, one sees incipient differentiae, rubbery pincers, a kind of mouth. Gus nudges it with a eucalyptus prong. The thing gathers itself, wrinkles up for a kind of progress—is this what our wrinkles spell? The pincer shifts, the ocean rolls closer, a bubbled fringe breaks round the glob. "It lives," I said. "It's alive."

—I'm going to bring it up to Mom.

—She'll collapse.

—You carry it.

—You're out of your little mind, lovey.

—I'll get me the bucket.

—Leave it alone. Let it go back to the ocean.

Which almost happens as the next wave, lapped by its twin, floods the creature and brings it homeward a foot or two.

"I'm gonna get the bucket." Since I have a sweet sight in

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mind, the presentation of this uoiichh to the sleeping Jeff-U, I say nothing. The little pins mill up the first tier of steps.

I regard this miserable presentation of the sea. Wordsworth had not wasted a cubit of his verse on such as this. Yet it by no means deserved the terrible fate Fellini gave its giant, plastic cousin at the end of that rebuke to (and wallow in) grotesquerie, *La Dolce Vita*. Among jellyfish, it holds its glob high.

The water embraces it. I pick up Gus's prong and urge it seaward. At which, there issues a squirt of thin, pathetic ink. Gus is back, fist round the loop of a metal bucket. "What happened?" A wave comes up, flushes feet and fish. "Help me, Daddy."

Gus puts the bucket edge on the jellyfish's. An inch of glob is on the metal. And then again, squirt, tiny hemorrhage from hidden wrinkles. "Gus, this jellyfish is bleeding. He's in pain."

Gus laughs at this splendid joke, takes eucalyptus prong in right, bucket in left hand, and tries to fork up glob. Another discharge barely misses his foot.

I take the branch, throw it into the water, and detach his fingers from the bucket. "Leave it be."

Oddly enough, no tantrum. But we run no more, ascend with the story of our discovery to awakened Davy, who doffs pajamas for shorts, runs to the beach, and ascends to tell us he can't find it. What relief. The Wounded Vet has made his way home. (*Histoire d'un Uoiichh.*)

2

On the wall of the Davy/Jeff-U bathroom (unusable toilet) there's a painting, "one of a series by Emil G. Bethke interpreting the world of ophthalmology." This Kandinsky cluster of globes—eye, earth, lens, sun—"illustrates the persistence of roundness, a simple derivative of the roundness of the eye, the solar bodies and the very instruments with which we examine them." I discharge medusa-shaped phlegm into the sink and meet Herr Bethke's globes. ("Medusa," for I

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have looked up "jellyfish" in Sackerville's big *Webster* and seen the picture of the rag-of-bone-hank-of-hair creature named by some witty naturalist.) My yellow-brown glob, trailing its thin throat reins, supports the thesis of Emil Bethke's art.

Roundness. Persistence. Tonal row. Row nothing. It is roundness, circular. A trap.

In Chicago, the Department's musical electrode, Derek Slueter, corners me weekly with the latest advance in musical slavery, "Dumbandeafer's Solipsism for Electro-Encephalograph" (a pianist playing while hooked to the apparatus whose record of his reactions to being hooked dictates what he plays).

To Slueter, Wendt: "I compose for liberation, not tyranny."

Secretive, snaggle-toothed, Jesus-bearded boy, he smears Game Theory, movies, computers, and synthesizers on our departmental head (and budget). The peace of Santa Barbara is, in no small measure, a Slueter-less peace.

Yet today, at the cypress work table, I sink not into the delicate shoals of my dear Deffand's exchanges with the icy bachelor, but into the calluses, cancerous boles, and labia-shaped knots. One week ago, they drove my fantasies, then me to the Ali Baba Café on Salsepuedes Street, where I slipped in behind the blue-lit teamsters, soldiers, adolescents, iron-eyed, gray-headed ex-sailors and watched the bumps and jangles of Miranda, the Gaza Stripper, almost stiffened enough to ask the mini-skirted dank blond waitress what time she finished. In the living room here there is a table made of a stump of eucalyptus. Its almost flesh-colored (Caucasian) gap faces the couch. I have not been able to joke about it. The persistence of need, a prison.

This morning, everything underlines enclosure: the staves I rule on the white paper, the sharps turning keys which fail to open doors, the annual striations of the cypress, the marine wrinkles raised to purplish bars of cloud. The persistence of uoiichh.

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3

We sit, the four of us, Donloubie and his Missus, Velia and I, in a stupendous room before fifty feet of treated glass within which preen five miles of crescent beach and untold acres of moon-and-oil-rig-lit ocean.

The room is modeled after the Double Cube at Wilton, but "fifty percent larger," says Donloubie, stranding my small mathematics. A crystal mass, twenty feet above us, draws mild glitter from a hundred gold and silver objects—trays, decanters, dishes, whatnots. Soft light seeps from ivory walls indented with bas-reliefs of mermaids, plastery mock-ups of stonework in the Church of the Miracoli.

We're couched on fifteen curved feet of gold and rose drinking some vodka concoction reddened by a raspberry-like offspring from Donloubie's hothouse. A black-tied, hunched-up butler (not the chauffeur) approaches with heaped tray.

"Ooh," says Missus D., "China Chicks." Butler leans with his great offering, I study the crusted containers of herb and dribblings, reach for a couple, and then—they are so small—as the servant withdraws, reach again, causing him to miscalculate so that the tray tips and one of the tiny globs falls over the edge to the golden tundra of carpet.

—Swine.

Donloubie, eyes like red ice.

I, momentarily taking this qualifier to myself (who better?), flush, swallow, cough. Butler, hide leathered by frequent whips, mutters apology (to me, Donloubie, or perhaps the injured Chick), scoops, large tray perfectly suspended in one hand—had they recruited him from the defunct Twentieth Century Limited?—and begins a second passage of the Chicks. Persistence of roundness. Velia utters profound Thank You's against Butler's perhaps-humiliation. His back in retreat, humps an extra centimeter, hours nearer its grave.

Masters and servants were having and giving bad times in Santa Barbara. The police had arrested Mrs. Joel's house-

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keeper, Mrs. Wrightsman. Donloubie: "Not that I blame the woman. Joel said his missus threw her dinners on the floor."

Is the floor Santa Barbara's sacred space?

Perhaps to Mona Wrightsman, who, bent there to retrieve her spurned veal chop, there gathered the final fury of a hundred such rejections, from there rose to the vicious spurner, and, there standing, rage and pan still hot, beat and beat again the thin, hated skull.

Home, I read in Roger Caillois's *Man, Play and Games* of the romantic toys of boys, the practical toys of girls. Had the child Mona been given miniature skillets? And Butler, had he been given by mistake a broom instead of a three-master? (So China Chicks instead of China Clippers.) And Mrs. Joel, who refused meal after meal, not to find what slaked her appetite, but—Donloubie's version—to fill the day's tyrannic quota—what were her Christmas gifts? Dolls? Which cried when squeezed? Ninety-five-pound Caesar in rose bathrobe and puffy slippers (Mrs. Wrightsman's doll) to be swatted, sponged, stripped, lifted by those muscular arms, carried to lidded pool, dumped, and lidded up again.

Velia, in rebellious connubial servitude, once again determines nevermore to take master-talk from Julius Charlemagne Robespierre Wendt, turns her back to him and reaches bed-edge. Wendt, Servant, if not Sum, of Appetite and Ambition, conjures up from opposite edge the golden spread of the Musical Anti-Christ Davidov's wife, and breathing, grunting, manacled, and sinking, covets, covets.

Names and Games, Tales and Flails

I

News drifts in muted to our still cove. Plains, mountains, and deserts do something to televised accounts of Cleveland riots, political treks, the Politburo in Prague, or even, just north of us, the trial of Newton, the Black Panther. The

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palms, the waves, the dowitcher trills, E flat, G, make it all remote.

Chicago devotee of *The New York Times*, here Velia skims the eight-page *News-Press* and reads California history. She likes to snow me with unexpected expertise, and hides her sources under pillows, behind Sackerville's pathetic library, or her boxes of Modess. A literary Geiger counter, I find them all. I leave no print unread, cookbooks, cereal boxes, Jeff-U's *Pigskin Prevue*, Davy's *Mad*. From the toilet seat I spot behind the blue Economy-Size box, Professor Bean's *California, An Interpretation*, and read how this hundred million acres of mountain, desert, parboiled valley, and paradisal cove received its name from Calafia, Queen of California (an "island between India and paradise"), a black beauty who trained griffins to feed on men. Recruited to fight Amadis of Gaul and his son Esplandian at Constantinople, her winged assistants chewed up both sides. Broken, she turned Christian, married Esplandian's son, and took him back to California. All splendiferously rendered by García Ordóñez de Montalva, and read by the deputies of Cortez who sailed up the difficult coast the year after downing Montezuma.

Friday afternoon, for the first time in my daily racket encounters with Jeff-U, my arm could not deliver the cannonballs which plunge him into errors, despair, and double faults. My smart drop shots, volleys, slices, cuts, and crosscourt lobs were countered by confident drives. Jeff-U bounced up and down in wait for my patsy service and swung like his dream of Pancho Gonzales. Six-two, six-one. I walked off with a dry-mouth whistle, asweat from black eyes to limp crotch, drove wildly home on the freeway, neck too sore to check the approaches, honked at by swerving Jaguars, missing the Serena turnoff and forced to double back from Summerland along the railroad track.

Saturday, after three hours of fluffing Walpole's aria at Mme. Du Deffand's death, music which I must repeat when Mary Berry hears of Walpole's death, I was ready for revenge. I hung around Jeff-U's prostrate form, his immense, bony, but well-made back (ah, I thought, I have given him

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something, Velia's back being a less-distinguished feature of her body, curved by some displacement of vertebrae into a flattened S). The back was being tickled for a penny a minute by Gus and Davy, alternately.

"Wanna play?" asked Jeff-U. Cut-rate Medici of Titillation.

The boys said, "Yes."

I said, "Why not?" and we were off in Sackerville's VW to the beautiful court set in the California oak grove of the Montecito park. There in Act II of the agon, I lost the first set 6–1, went silently into the second, won the first two games, lost the third out of sheer weakness, not having the strength to serve consistently hard, arm aching with previsioned defeat, lost the next four, and then, going to position on the base line, heard Jeff-U say his finger was blistering, and "Let's quit," meaning, "We've made the point, why continue?" I left the court silent, trailed by the three boys—the little ones having played during warm-up time—and went in silence home. There, before my shower, I sat down at the little upright I'd rented for our room, and worked out with terrific speed a perfect aria. I haven't played it over, haven't dared, but I feel its rightness, its place in the score, its power, felt its words (a line of French, then one of English) as the sybaritic bachelor imagines writing a letter to the dead woman who, from the screen, interprets his words in such a way that they drive small, elegant stakes into her heart.

The explosion—to use the word which in the 1960s stands for every exacerbated encounter, chemical or human, mental or physical—the explosion at Jeff-U came out of the void the next day, an hour before he is to call for Ollendorf (who changed flights at the last minute and arrived a day early). "Better put clean sheets on your bed for him," said I.

"O.K." He gets up, surprising me a bit by the speed of his accession to my request. "I'll put one sheet on."

—Better put two.

—He's my friend. I know what he wants.

I get up and follow him to the linen closet. "Take two, please. Your mother and I are his hosts, it's up to us to see things are done right."

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—Bullshit.

I take this in stance for a bit. He has gone inside with the two sheets. I follow, notice his bathtub is filled with sand. "I've asked you to keep the sand out of that bathtub."

—That's Davy. He comes in the back way, washes his feet in there every day, five times a day, and the sand just stays there.

"Will you clean it out please, before you go?" My words are polite, but, Walpole-like, there is the undercurrent of menace in them.

—Let Davy do it.

"I realize you've had a tough day, a tough six weeks," I say. "I know you're exhausted from having your back tickled, but I want you to clean it, so your mother doesn't have to further twist her back doing it herself."

"Eff-u," says Jeff-U. (Despite almost universal literary freedom, I am a child of repression in print and usually refrain from writing out what is a not infrequent presence in my speech. ((Let the Edwardian guff of this sentence express my feeling.)))

I approach him, eyes aglitter with rage. "You say that to me once more, and I'll knock the living crap out of you."

His eyes show scare, but he forces his voice through it. "You better not hit me. Ever again."

At which, the rage of days touched off, I shove him across the room onto the bed. He yells, his legs, very long legs, sneakered, start kicking wildly, pumping him up. I crowd him, daring more violent response. "You effing bastard," is the response.

I punch his arm hard.

He leaps up, I punch and miss, he gets out the door, and now amazed (for I've never hit him like this), as well as fearful and furious, he calls to the closed door of our room, "Cmere, Mom, cmere, Dad's trying to *hurt* me."

And I, hearing the wonder in this, O brave new world that has this in it, feel my fire flooded, doused, and think, My god, this is Jeff-U, little beauty-boy whom I showed off to Mlle. Boulanger in Paris (a picture keeps this memory

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refreshed), to whom I gave milk bottles in Cologne reciting the *Inferno*, singing the *Well-Tempered Clavichord*, dear companion and confidant, and he is just learning that I am —*was*! —trying to hurt him.

I stride out, whisper in the muted menace-voice of Jimmy Cagney (fellow alumnus of Stuyvesant High School, along with Lewis Mumford and Daniel Bell), "Don't upset me like that again, Jeffrey. Never again."

"I'm not upset," he says.

My rage starts up, my tone rests monotonous. "You haven't the emotional richness of a pebble," and go into the bathroom, heart throbbing terribly, mind so swept with self-disgust, disgust at Jeff-U, disgust at my violent failure as a father, I'm unable to speak to him with any ease at all for four or five days, even with Ollendorf there. (Ollendorf turns out to be a jolly, decent boy, who comes in on a happy roar and jokes the entire two weeks he remains.)

2

Velia has accepted an invitation to a "peace-making" dinner at the Mullidynes.

"Why did you accept?" I yell. "You know I can't see people when I'm working."

Not quite true, sometimes I have to see them. "Is that effer, Davidov, coming?"

"I assume that's what the peace-making is about," said Velia, who has had a triumphant version of my squelch, without, of course, its sexual basso rilievo.

The Mullidynes live in the hills on the lip of the desert. Donald Taylor drives us up in Ryan, his convertible (brought from a man named Ryan who never put the top down but liked the style of convertibles). The drive is up the Riviera, Santa Barbara spread out like a cupful of Genoa, then into the strange broken, mocha-colored hills nudging and nuzzling each other, the most artful, Cézanne-looking hills I've ever seen (and I was once in Aix-en-Provence for the playing

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of the *Drang Nach Bach* songs, my opus 9).

All the way, the body of Patricia Davidov rises from those hills to calm the agitation raised by the menacing apparition of her husband.

But when we arrive at Mullidyne's house—a fine eyebrow on a noble hill—the Davidovs are not there. Nor do they come. Had he refused? Or had Mullidyne managed to unhinge his lower jaw? (The evening supplied the answer.)

Mullidyne is quite decent out of Davidov's presence. And his wife turns out to be quite remarkable, very long and soft and smart, a cabinetmaker, fisherman, linguist, mother of an immense well-mannered and—tonight—inconspicuous brood, an honest person who does not press for intimacy yet is quickly your intimate. (Life is too short for anything else, she seems to say.) Finally, a marvelous cook. We have a terrific kidney dish, I see the Escoffier open in the kitchen, it must be Number 1339, *Turban de Rognons à la Piemontaise*, "Fill a ring with *rizotto à la Piemontaise* (2258), press into the mold and keep hot." And, after, marvelous melon balls and strawberries from the valley. Says Sandra in a voice you would expect a rose to have, "I wanted to have valley grapes in hard sauce, but Chavez has called for a boycott of table grapes, I don't dare buy them." Velia, who has just lugged home a mountain of green grapes, receives a punishing stare from me, and says "I'm not a Californian."

"Don't buy them again," say I, though kindly. Velia has a new dress, a Finnish print (she has read the Finns have learned to stain materials a new way), full of blue and yellow balls and great stripes, a kind of sack but better formed, light, but you know (she says) you've got something on, a knockout, it almost restores her looks. (She had them, her legs are very fine, her body thin, but neat; but that's over.)

It is a night for stories. Of a pattern, as I see it four hours later, riding down the hill in the dark, each story so much more final in its way than a tennis match. (Though who knows. The people involved may have emerged from the fierce predicaments in which our memory abandoned them.)

The one that tells for me is about the Davidovs, but its

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trailer also stays, another account of domestic fury about Sandra's psychology professor at Duke, a man who, infected with J. B. Rhinitis, took to a Jungian strain of it, the so-called "substratum of certain memories which were 'not one's own,'" the apparent ability of some semi-mesmerized people to "recall" experiences of psychic ancestors, "Bridie Murphys," or "Viennese court ladies." His wife, a student of cell conductivity in frogs, expressed the contempt a lifetime's Scotch-Presbyterianism had schooled her never to express by telling him that she too had strange inklings of an antecedent life. "Oh yes?" he said, from his worldly, husband side. "Were you a cigar butt in Sir Walter Raleigh's mouth?" But weeks later, short of a willing subject, he decided he had perhaps overlooked a local treasure, and asked if she were still smoldering in Raleigh's jaws.

"No," she said, "but I was bending over the microscope last week when I had the strangest feeling that I was gathering fernshoots by a river with a name I knew deeply but which now sounds strange to even pronounce." She had never used and he had never heard the word "fernshoots" before.

He removed his Roi-tan from the ashtray, inhaled for steadiness, and asked what name that was. "Huai," she said.

"I'm curious, why do you think?"

"The River Huai," she said, "a broad river curling around a kind of cape of firlike trees."

"We can begin tonight," he said, and had her lie back on a couch, and switched on his tape recorder. There she registered her month's secretive research into fourth-century Chinese history. She was, she said, a Sinic farm girl living near river fortifications worried by Sienpi troops; her father, Li Huang-ti, grumbled in Chinese—she'd spent twenty hours in the language lab, playing the records—about taking his turn as sentry on the wall. (Sandra's account was more detailed.)

The Jungian husband, blank like most of us to any Chinese history between Confucius and Sun Yat-sen, had the notes transcribed and taken to the American professor of "Chinese Civilization: A Survey," not at first revealing the extraordinary source, but when told that, yes, there was such a river,

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there was a repulsion of nomadic invasion attempts in the fourth century, said, "It's my wife," and asked if the strange sounds which issued from her were authentic Chinese. "I've never bothered speaking it," said the scholar. "Though I pick out what might be a few words. But here," and he smudged out a few characters, "see if she knows these characters. I'll transcribe the English sounds for you." That night, the Chinese peasant girl disclaimed ability to read, that was only for administrators of the rites.

So it went for weeks, until a book-length monograph was transcribed from the tapes, the West Virginia farm girl translating more of her feeling into fourth-century China than she had ever revealed on her own. Her husband was enchanted with this metamorphosis of dogged student of cell conductivity into naïvely sensuous Chinese village girl (raped by Uncle Su-i Chen, taken up as concubine by a weaver from Shang-Chi, dying of pneumonia)—all mimicked on the stiff Grand Rapids sofa while he, the rapt psychologist, fell away from all his domineering cynicism and behavioral training. After he submitted the manuscript with full complement of annotation to, not the *Journal of Parapsychology*, but Basic Books, his wife told him over his four-minute eggs that she'd played this little joke on him, she thought it was the way to lead him back to proper experimental work, some of the books she'd used were in the upper shelf of the linen closet, would he perhaps return them to the library, they were overdue, and his first class was nearer to it than her lab, she would bring him home a nice sirloin for supper.

When she came home that night, he had not left the chair; she drove him to the hospital, and when, six weeks later, he came out, the term was over and she had gone.

Watching Sandra stroke her husband's browless little head (tactile conclusion to this gruesome tale), I thought, "Aha, this soft jewel of a woman, this fruit goddess with her great bowl of rose and golden balls, has suffered terrible blows somewhere, Mullidyne is her rock. He must have his facet of tenderness as she must have hers of toad. Soft jewel with toad in head. Such beauteous carats congeal only from

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secreted poison. Brutal father. Psychopathic mother."

"Tell about Davidov and Pat," she told Mullidyne in her lovely voice, and in white virgin's dress, passed the crystal bowl of strawberries and melon balls. Behind her, a great window showed night squeezing a line of sun-fire against the blunt point of the hill. "Davidov," said Mullidyne, and laughed. "Davidov." And with what one then could see was indeed a bit of forehead, contrived a wrinkle or two of frown.

Davidov, he said, sprang from the bowels of the Brooklyn ghetto. Ugly, squat, an atheist broken from an orthodox cigar-roller's home, "saved for scholarship" by the public library, where, each week, he read B. H. Haggin in *The Nation* and resolved to study music, not for love of music —"He's next to tone deaf"—but for love of the destruction he sensed—wrongly—in Haggin's devastating columns. Native shrewdness sent him to the top of Boys' High and into City College. In forty-two, despite feeble vision and flat feet, he was drafted, pulled like a rodent from New York, and sent, dazzled by fear, to a Kansas army camp, where he stayed, goldbricking and clerking. Knowing he'd need proficiency in an instrument to pursue musical studies, he got a local drummer to teach him the tympani. In forty-five, he was transferred to San Francisco, and aimed like a broken arrow for the Japanese invasion, but, with Hiroshima and the end of the war, was discharged in Oakland. He walked over to Berkeley, enrolled with his G.I. Bill, and became the first World War II veteran to get a doctorate in music, his dissertation, *The Failure of Opus 111: An Analysis of Tovey's Critical Blindness and Beethoven's Musical Deafness.*(The manuscript, on my office desk, had been revised for a publication which was never to be.)

In Berkeley, he taught two freshman Musical Appreciation classes. Enrolled in one, and soon auditing the other, was a beautiful co-ed from the Napa Valley named Patricia Mulholland, the poor, smart daughter of a workman in the Mondavi Bottling Plant at St. Helena, a cousin of the Los Angeles aquaduct-builder. That this long, great-titted, gol-

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den beauty with a famous California name should be hanging on every word dropped from his muzzle (my memory has altered Mullidyne's more straightforward vocabulary) so intoxicated Davidov that his lectures became wilder and wilder, more and more notorious. The destruction of every musical reputation past and present fused with the discovery of sexual perversity or ineptitude in nine-tenths of the great composers of musical history. He called the fusion the Myth of the Castrated Orpheus. It had the postwar co-eds slavering at his very name. But Pat was there first, and with the most, and, age seventeen, she let her untouched cup run over the parched, violent instructor. With the ferocity of a miser, he whisked her down to City Hall, wrote Davidov after her name, and within a month had impregnated her with the first of their five children, two sons who but faintly darkened the generous gold of Mulholland genes, three daughters who stooped under the squat darkness of Davidov's. And down the coast they moved to Santa Barbara's new campus, where he took over as chairman—though then but assistant professor—of the Music Department.

Here revolts began. First, his colleagues protested his tyranny, obstinacy, and musical ignorance to the chancellor of the University, who removed him from the chairmanship and threatened to withhold tenure unless he mended his tattered ways, and then Patricia, who told him that she loathed him more than any human being could be loathed, felt she was married to the devil himself, and was now ready to have affairs on any street corner with any man who'd deign to look by her ever-swelling belly to the great promise of her never-fulfilled-by-Davidov interior.

Under these twin assaults, Davidov, like rotten wood, broke apart. While Pat picked up astonished flutists in his own department, took them to motels, paid the bills, and shed her extraordinary graces on their graceless heads (this from the unbeautiful, browless Mullidyne), Davidov stayed in the hot mesa apartment, warming the bottles, changing the diapers, driving the kids to school, and hiring sitters when he had to stagger to the University to give his but

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slightly less fiery lectures on the febrile contortions of Handel and Pergolesi. At night, he would call down the list of graduate students, till he traced Pat's lover-of-the-day, and beg him to release her for the night. Then, said Mullidyne, he found me at Alabama, liked my little article in *Musical Quarterly* on the "Harmonic Blunders in *Le Nozze de Figaro*," brought me here, and then, from the moment I arrived, poured into my ear his tribulations with Pat, with the Department, with the life he led, he, the great Davidov, who should be shaping the strong intellects of men who would rewrite musical history, transform the flaccidity of contemporary composers and performers, and water this Sahara of the Arts with the kind of criticism which had lifted literature from caveman grunts to the heights of Miller, Dahlberg, and Selby. "I," said Mullidyne, "who had my friend, Sandra, waiting here at the hearth for me, though we were on Anacapa Street then, couldn't tear myself away until Pat would grind up in their Pontiac—exhausted but triumphant—and brush past poor Davidov with, 'Did you remember to put the vitamins in Gloria's bottle?'"

What vengeance. Yet if she hated him, she hated herself worse. (This seemed reasonable to even Pat-lusting me.) "Sash here had to go to her sister's funeral and take care of her kids for two weeks; and Pat was on my doorstep every time I came back from class, 'I've told Bert I'm here, he's not to bother you,' and she'd lie on the couch, shoes off—she has beautiful feet, kind of thick ankles but terrific legs. I nearly went out of my frigging mind. She begged me to run away with her, I should leave Sash—Sash knows this—Sash, she said, was too soft for a man of my mettle, whereas she'd become hard on Davidov's brutality, she was basically soft as Sash but would stand up to me, improve me. And I'd just shake my head and say I wish she were happy but couldn't she make it for her children, if not for Bert. And she said, 'They have his heart. They can think of nothing but what's in front of them. Or worse, what's in front of each other. They live to eat, they lie around, they have no curiosity.' But I couldn't believe it, I thought the children amazingly

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good in view of what was happening in the home, helpful to their father, sympathizing with him, yet, as far as I could see, not harsh to their mother. And then she'd go, and half an hour later, Bert would call and ask what did she say, what did she do, and I would say, 'Please keep her away from me, she just complains of her unhappiness, she's such a child it's tragic.' And he'd say, 'Just let her talk to you for a bit, it's better than her picking up these bastards in the street, maybe she'll talk herself out of it. At home, she never says anything, she never talked, ever, except dumb-ass women's questions, why this and why that, why's the ground down, why's the sky up, and I'd have to knock the shit out of her, here she'd been my own student, I'd given her a couple of A's, I still think she earned them, but she was probably just giving me back my own words and I was so blinded by my putz I didn't see what I was getting into, Jesus Christ, I wasn't made for this, Frankie,' and on and on, till I'd say, 'Bertie, I've got to go to sleep, Sash is calling me and forgive me.' He'd scream, 'You effing pig-sticker, you're nothing but a mouse-brain pig-sticker, I saved you from George Wallace and pellagra and you can't give me the time of day, you're an effing sonovabitch,' and so on, until the next day, or maybe two days later, he wouldn't call, but he'd know what time I went to pick up my mail, and he'd bump into me, and say, 'Francis, I was wrong, you and I are the same type, we're both married to dumb pigs, we both know music, we oughtn't to quarrel.' And it would start all over again."

Sandra, on the couch by her husband, smiled as if she'd not heard this story, as if her husband had repulsed the proffered detente with, "Don't say my wife's a pig. Or even yours."

"But she's still with him," said Velia. "I saw them holding hands downtown in the Paseo." (And my heart bumped in fury, at Velia, at Davidov, at Patricia.)

"What happened," said Mullidyne, "was some kind of contract he made with her. He let her have a round-the-world trip, and in the interval, he built her this house on the shore, it must have cost him sixty thousand even seven years

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ago, and he hardly had a nickel. He taught night classes, lectured all over, though nobody'd ever heard of him, he wrote book reviews at twenty dollars a shot, not even taking time to open the books, just pouring them out, on any subject, he did a stint on the roads in the summer—he's still got muscles under that flab—everything, and she came back after four months and she's stayed down there, and I haven't been asked once, and though I see her at parties, it's one nod and good-bye, and that's the way it's been for seven years. Oddly enough, I still care for him. And for her. He's a brute, yes, but he's got standards. He cares deeply. He thinks, maybe wildly, but how many think at all?"

Snaking down the Marcos Pass in Ryan, Donald Taylor, as if charged up by the foam of these passionate stories, said, "My God, how can Mullidyne take him? How can he go on all these years with all that he knows about him?" "He has to have his Misery Vitamins every day. Maybe to have something to amuse that great wife of his," I said, taking a look from mine.

My bed-reading in dear Deffand's letters offered a better answer. Wrote the old poison pen about Buffon, the naturalist, "*Il ne s'occupe que des bêtes; il faut l'être un peu soi-meme.*"

Gradations of Effing

That night, stimulated by this storied bowl of untasted goodies, I slept with my dear wife for the first time in a month. A certain, special pleasure, old acquaintance newly met, though of course with P.D.'s imagined opulence fresh on my mental bones, I was scarcely replete after the short-order feast. (Though the polar breeze of imagined betrayal gave its own zing of sadness and soft revenge; what a rummage sale sex is.)

In the Tacitean tradition, my Walpole was a great comparer; surefooted, though procrustean. This morning, while the lawn sprinkler makes instant rainbows in its whirl, and there is otherwise a stillness in pine, palm, and fir, it strikes

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me I want a musical comparison between such elegance of gradation and the rough-hewn, grandly uncertain gradation of my own mind. Music has splendid means of articulating such contrasts. I think my opera may be about the difference between oceanic passion and terrene order; policeman and prostitute, each a social control for other people's passion, summon up Walpole and Mme. Du Deffand to control their own. Something like that.

But it's not enough. Judgment and action live on fine-honed distinctions; verbal ones. ("Galba had the capacity to rule, if only he hadn't."—Tacitus. "Pitt liked the dignity of despotism, Mansfield, the reality."—Walpole.) Velia and the thought of Patricia offer different things. What to choose? (Maybe the policemen should fall in love with Madame Du Deffand. Like the detective in *Laura*.)

I'd waked up choked with such thought; or, not choked, soaked. In that estuary—in between—state, I heard a thickening of line, a gulf of bass, E C sharp D D flat. Pressure: and into mind Voltaire called out by Rohan's bullies, beaten in the street, Rohan, chaired, saying, "Spare the head. It can still amuse us," the crowd watching Voltaire, bleeding, mad with fury and astonishment, the crowd saying of Rohan. "Oh, that was decent. *Le bon seigneur*." "Enough," says Rohan. Voltaire, up, bony, long, bemudded, back to the drawing room, where he had been the light of the company, answering their gaping faces with his story, seeing them freeze, sympathetic emotion not available for the likes of him; a solo bassoon, staggering in fifths, a clutch of cello, a slash of violin, and then, orchestral rumbling, a small structure building. From this day, Voltaire's dazzle will burn, the Revolution is ten years nearer.

Pressure. In the bed, a sense of leg, Velia's. I roll over, lift an interposed valley of blanket, the leg shifts away. Cold, dangerous, selfish, womb-raddled, public-minded, hating.

Yesterday, in the San Ysidro Pharmacy, buying wine, I waited by the magazines till the afternoon *News-Press* arrived with the latest on the Joel case. By the fifteen-dollar cribbage boards and Japanese television sets for the beach, a barefoot

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girl, with fantastic legs and rear. Bare-armed, face pale, blond, a little blunted, but with that sense in the nostrils and mouth that she wanted someone. Her breasts. No great matter, but there in an easy flowered blouse. White pants, a cozy for her beauteous rump. Wrenching legs. I looked up from *Scientific American* and caught her sense of being looked at. She came back, examined the paperbacks. Had she ever gone through a book? She came to the magazines. In a minute, I turned and brushed her arm. How old? Statutory-rape age. I couldn't tell. Hopefully eighteen, more hopefully twenty, but not unlikely, fifteen, sixteen. Too young, even in this new world where anything goes, where anything that can be called love is applauded—cows, leaves, watermelons, Krafft-Ebing sweetened for mass production—like "Château Lafitte" made out of horse blood, cow urine, and the discarded skins of Marseilles grapes. The Revolution's won, we are all privileged, it is not kitsch, mass culture is for real, though it is plain style for all. I stoop for *Life*, my bare arm, tanned beneath short shirt, feathers the fantastic leg. All I need is "Can I give you a lift?" or "Shall we?" or "Let's go outside" or "I'll be in the VW." I have Sackerville's plates, I'll use a version of his name. There is a whole string of new motels, half-empty. Or, hell, in the fields, bugs crawling in us. *Life* has investigations of thalidomide children learning to cope, a crack at American doctors who didn't know about the Heidelberg clinic where the child learns how to zip, walk, eat, and, as they put it, "toilet himself." Why doesn't every doctor call into the World Health O., which has all the stuff on a computer? Like that Hemingway story of the doctor who carries the Guide to Medicine indexed for symptoms and treatment. *Life* quotes one of the benevolently lethal Rostow brothers. Never a time when so great a percentage spent on armament, yet Donald Taylor told me we're almost back at the Renaissance, when the Napiers and Da Vincis refused to publish their lethal inventions. Only vacant-minded puritans and bright tinkerers will work on weapons. But there's the rub. I stoop again, the leg is there. I take my seven-buck Château Lafitte and depart. I will not be refused, I will not be arrested. (Though

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I know the symptoms and the treatment, I will stick with my disease.)

2

I look up Davidov in the Faculty List, dial, but hang up before the tone, then sit by the phone and look at the eucalyptus, a huge salmon, its terrible insides exposed by the old fire bolt. I ring again.

A child's voice: "Davidov residence."

—May I please speak with Mrs. Davidov?

A flash of music, a terrific theme. I leap to score paper, phone stretched in left hand, pencil notes, De, dom, dom, dom, de, da-da, dada, da-da, dee de dom. Heavenly, and then more, a flood, transpose, shift, work in the tonic, a depth of bass, a figure.

—Yes? Yes? Who is it?

—Pat?

—Yes. Who's this?

Sigh: Defenestration of Inspiration. "It's Jeff Wendt."

"Oh. Didn't think I'd hear from you." Meaning?

—I want to talk to you. Not to Bert. Just you. Think we can manage that?

Pause. "Mmm." I was in.

—Your body's on my mind. I want to see it. I want to see you. I can hardly wait.

—Mmm.

—Can you meet me at the Safeway in fifteen minutes?

—Half an hour.

—I'll be there in fifteen minutes, in a yellow VW. I'll park as far from the store as I can, in the southeast part of the lot.

—I can't figure directions.

—I'll see you. What'll you be driving?

—A beat-up powder-blue Ford station wagon.

—I can't wait to see you. So long.

—Good-bye.

I haven't shaved. I haven't shat. Bowels crucial. At home,

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I shave, shit, and read at once. Velia has taken a picture of the three-ring activity. If I write a sequel to this memoir in the new age of freedom, it will be the dust jacket. Here, the plug is too far from the toilet. I first squat. (The equalizer: Shelley, the Kennedys, Bonaparte, Walpole, Anaximander; Thales fell into a pile of it.) I am too nervous to let go. Then shave with my Philips, bought two years ago in Amsterdam after they played the *Quartet in No Movement* and after the only visit of my life to an official whore.

—You off?

—Yeah.

—I need to get a few things at the store.

Christ. The Safeway. "I'll pick 'em up. Give me a list."

Grumble, but she writes one.

Jeff-U has my car keys, he has lost his ninth set. ("I suppose you never lose anything." "You jerk, I pay for what I lose and pay for the replacement. And still I haven't lost a key since nineteen-sixty-one." Arbitrary figure. "Or anything else. Not only is your mind a sieve, but your pockets are full of holes. And the main thing is, you just don't give a damn. Well, that is going to change, buster brown, you are going to be paying your own sweet freight very soon.") The keys are in his back pocket, along with a besanded dollar bill, gum wrappers, change, and, Lord love us, a hairpin with a blond hair therein. Nobody but Davy has blond hair in the Wendt family. My God. When has he had the time?

I have lost all feeling in my gavel. I may not be able to do my stuff. Fantastic.

But I'm there, baking on the asphalt lot, fifteen reflective minutes before the station wagon wheels up the ramp an indiscreet thirty miles an hour, whirls down the last row, then the middle, where I am, and finds a place two empty cars away. My God, she's a big woman.

—Hlo.

I lean in the half-open window. It is the east, and Patricia. The alba is the blast of a Jaguar. ("Ah," says Donald, driving into Montecito, "a Jaguar. I'm home." He saw a black Cadillac the other day. "What are things coming to?" There are

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more Rolls-Royces for these ninety-three hundred people than in any four blocks of Park or Fifth.) "Glad you came."

She has on one of these psychedelic prints which women with small figures can use as camouflage but which a great beauty like this doesn't need. All she needs is a strip of burlap, one single color with maybe one odd streak of another. The rest done by that great corpus delicti (though not, as yet, by me). "Where you wanna talk?"

—See that motel down the corner. That's where.

—Climb in.

I go around. The door is stuck. Davidov hasn't thrown a new car in with the house and round-the-world. She leans over, and it is then, lightly through the glass, that I catch the outline which cements the runny swamp of my belly, stiffens the gavel, the resolve, here in the noon parking lot of the neo-Aztec center (bougainvillaea empurpling the latticework, a gnarled oak brought in from the hills to make a jungle nook).

The *patronne*, back from making beds and distributing packets of soap, comes in from her betwixt brunch-and-lunch coffee. "Wife and I have been driving since dawn. We need a quick snooze. Up from..."

—Fifteen dollars. You can have Number Three, not on the highway.

I sign in "Mr. and Mrs. J. Mullidyne."

We enter the blind-drawn, shadowy room with the double bed. Patricia kicks off her shoes, she is down to five-ten, turns around, her face flushed, her pointed nose huffed with breath, thin mouth open. She holds out her arms. I lean toward the burst of orange and purple sun between her breasts and kiss the rough material, wrap my arms around, and drive her awkwardly backward to the bed. Our breath would have terrified Mme. Du Deffand. (Did Walpole ever breathe like this?)

A deep kiss, her mouth rich with Filter Blend. Is there no Lavoris in the Davidov compound?

We rise. I take off my blue sport shirt, breathe hard, flex muscles.

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She rises. Venus, barefoot, bends for her hemline—she has somewhere unzipped—removes the dress so that, like a great banana unpeeled upside down, her immense, beauteous legs show to the pants, then her waist, ribs, the bra, marvelous, the neck. I manage out of my Bermudas despite new obstacle. I wear no underpants. She steps out of pants, I kiss her copious rear, draw up my arms, hers are unclasping her bra, I cup the haughty twins, flip off the cloth, she is mine, I hers, *Himmelweiss*. We fall back, we entangle, she mouths my home base, I hold back, agony, she is no novice, fortunate Davidov, this Napa Valley bottling queen. I make my way out, down the valley, hands on the hills, lower over the great hump, into the sweet divide, oh my, why is this not my daily life? What have I done not to deserve this?

What a sight from beneath, great palisades of peach, she bounces, she jounces, I manage with beach-hardened legs to upend her, I am on top, in the holy saddle. (Paul has just issued the decree from Rome. God, I assume this beauty is in touch with Dr. Rock's pill. Upon this rock. Poor Paul, will you go to your last resting place innocent of this huffing sweetness? In abundance, I think of the underprivileged.) And then, as always, and not when called for, the great maiden humming, noising, "Unck, oonck, yeyeye," and there we are. "Og God, maw, maw, maw." I try, I exert, I limp without fuel, she crushes me. Fiat. It is done.

I sink beneath, I work the tongue, oh crushing, those eucalyptic thighs. "Ahhhh," she says. My eardrums.

Done.

We lie. In a minute, I look over. The great body is working, it is gauzed with sweat. I feel a twinge of surge. It grows apace. I wait. It grows. I lean over, I mount. "Hello, Dolly," she says. We wrestle, we throw each other about. I enter, we somersault, we twist, we bite, we hug, we sniff, taste, we hurt, we work it up, we go, we keep going, we are there again.

Basta.

We hug each other. I sleep.

Awake. "We'll take a shower."

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I can hardly walk. I am shamed to be seen, so limply small am I.

We're in the shower. We soap each other's hair, back, chests, the sun breaks on the line of sea, she touches my aching swell, it is tender, retreats, she is back at my rear, I lean into her, we are face to face, we kiss under the jerking spurts of water. Wet, we track our way over the polished wood onto the sheets, we work our way, I slowly, she but fed by what has wearied me, though inside, she squeaks, is tight. I come up to the mark, there is a muscular spasm, there is something else. "I love you," says foolish old undergraduate I.

"I love this."

We agree to meet tomorrow at the Safeway. Two o'clock. I will have a longer time to work.

3

It turns out (what I have but suspected and hardly cared about till now) that I am not the only one in the family making the record. Velia's notebooks, which I thought contained merely digests of her occasional course work at the School of Social Service Administration (her pre-menopausal contribution to urban wreekage), contain personal observations as well. I should have married Roz, the constricted Connecticuter whose bowels would not move for days (what a partner for Igor the Hypochondriacal Penman), or the culturally silenced Cholonese girl in the biology lab in Paris—was it Vo Ban?—who was so mad for navel-licking and the presence of oranges in the love-bed.

This record-keeping, though it is much more than that, is a late and perverse development. It must derive from our reading, in succession (me, as always—almost always— first), the novel of Tanizaki about the couple who leave their diaries open to stimulate each other's jaded impulse.

But what purpose has Velia's epic catalog of my smells, warts, and deformities (hairy toes, unbalanced ass, flabby

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chest, hawkish nose—black hair rampant on snotty verdure)? And is it intended for me? Or the children? (The notebooks lie all over the house.)

And, astonishingly, there are analyses of the unhappier traits of our (I assume) children: Gus's rages, Davy's stubbornness, Jeff-U's narcissism, Gina's sharp tongue. Are these her notion of the proper Annals of the Gens Wendt?

She is moving the vacuum around, the striated hose leashing the noise-box, which, she deeply knows, prevents my work. Barefoot, I sneak behind her and stamp the green circuit-breaker. She heaves, breathes fright, turns.

She has on yellow pants bought from Magnin's, a surge of Californianization, but her legs and rear are so thin, she cannot fill these glaring funnels. They droop pathetically below her coccyx, jounce, unpressed by sufficiency. Her face is red with repressed fury.

"I can't work with that." Courteously. "I'm sorry."

Her mouth sucks itself in, the cheeks dimple, not in female courtship, but in advertisement of displeasure at male peacockery.

"Translating your charming diary notes into music is a job that needs concentration. I can't simply transcribe them. I need a template. Music can't take such acids. Like the body, it needs solid stuff, proteins." And I pat the limp rear of the trousers. Her *beaux yeux*, a pure hazel, no one has such single-colored eyes as Velia, how long is it since they entranced me?

"You've been reading m-y private notebooks." That ascension for Miss Berry, end on B flat.

—You left them on the right—the northwest—corner of my very own work table. It was the clearest passage to India ever not-supposed-to-be traversed.

—I can't follow that. I don't read your notebooks.

—I don't keep diaries. My notebooks are sketchbooks. If you wash your hands, you can read them.

—I don't open your letters.

—I wouldn't say that.

—I haven't opened them in years unless I know they're also meant for me.

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When a marriage fails, the couple which has opened its other's mail, ceases to do so. And vice versa.

She sits down on the golden couch and covers her small face with her fine hands. Her grandmother's ring, weaving bands of emeralds, diamonds, and sapphires, glitters from the third finger, right hand. She hasn't worn her engagement ring for years. (Its diamond came from the navel of the little gold lady on my Uncle Herman's favorite ring. I won the ring in a Casino game when I was six. "That's what you call Big Casino," said Uncle Herman, and could not be made, even by Aunt Lillie, to take it back.) Velia says, "What did you read?"

—About the hair in my rump, the cruelty in my voice, the smell of my body.

—I was furious and controlled myself by writing everything down. Everything that annoyed me that day, I mean.

—It was very well written.

—Thank you.

—I myself don't think it's advisable to do this. It's not like taking a cold shower, or singing away your miseries. It's more like gastrulation, or, let me put it this way. It seems that internal organs are made from material on the egg surface. I mean, if you start showing, even superficially, your discontents and dislikes, like that face you made when I turned off the vacuum, or these little body Travel Notes of yours, the stuff won't go away. It'll seep inside and become part of you. So take a bit of care, or even living together as we are will become impossible. You know when we behave decently to each other, even on the manners level, we soon get to care more for each other.

Velia is crying. Noiselessly. Probably was during my physiological analogy. She asks whether it would be all right to go in the room. (The room where we sleep and I work.)

—Let me get my paper and pens out first.

She goes in, the yellow pants so pitifully ugly I can't watch them, they are now curled up, her face is in the pillow. I take up the sheet I'm working on, then put it back. "I can't work this way. I'm sorry I read your notebooks."

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She is heaving and humping in the pillow. No response. The situation is transformed, the apparent meek—who were never meek, just quiet in persistence—inherit the earth.

I grab *World Scriptures* and *Ideas of Modern Biology* (source of my analogy), and, in the kitchen, open a plastic cup of boysenberry yoghurt, whip, whip the scarlet juice in the low-fat whiteness, and read about the fly-catching feedback of a praying mantis. And for minutes keep from myself Velia's state.

Hold off from that puritan, judaic, masochistic analysis which will show me as tyrant, betrayer and brute, and will see Velia as Ariel calibanized by me. Mencius's disciple asked why some are great and some little men, and Mencius said the great men follow that part in them which is great, the little men that which is little. Hypocrisy, arrogance, wrath, conceit, harshness, and *Dummheit* enslave; fearlessness, steady wisdom, alms-giving (I gave the Negro shoeshiner in the shopping center a buck while I waited for Pat), self-restraint (I've never hit Velia), austerity (I've lived for months like a monk), truth (*oui et non*), mildness (*non et oui*), vigor (I run on the beach), forgiveness (mostly), absence of envy and pride (not absence, but overcoming)—these are the divine properties which liberate.

"The success of a given population structure is the probability of survival and reproduction, the fittest genotype that which maximizes the probability." (So pills, abstinence, then sheer attrition of sentiment prevent more Wendts; but more Wendts diminish the scope of existent Wendts; so loveless-ness is the trait which maximizes the survival of the Wendt population.) Walpole, Mme. Du Deffand, and Miss Berry survive by not marrying. (That generic energy went into what makes them survive.)

Behold, thou art fair, my love; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks, thy hair is like a flock of goats that appear from Mount Gilead, thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely, thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within thy locks, thy two breasts are like two young roses that are twins, which feed among the lilies. Until the day

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break, and the shadows flee, I will get me to the hill of frankincense... camphire with spikenard, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, myrrh and aloes, a fountain of gardens. Awake, O north wind; and come thou, south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come...

Yoghurt and boysenberry, magnolia, bird of paradise and plastic, honeysuckle and Velia, peaches, roses, VWs, New Yorkers, come my life, pasteurized homogenized DELICIOUS served just as it comes from the carton. Excellent with cheese. Net wt. 8 oz. Distr. by Safeway Stores. Inc., Head Office, Oakland, Cal. 94604.

History is Made Morning, Noon, and Night
or
When Nixon Runs, the Grunion Don't

I

Ocean noises, a piper's flatted G. No one in the house, even Velia making safari to the sands. At the cypress table, my four pens, red pencil, point like a shrew's eye, cubes of india rubber, the stylus with which I draw my own staves, the Weyerhausered trees on which I commit whatever will be my residue (I am not what's swimming in the waves below). I usually don't compose at the piano. A defect? I simply hear the music. I trust what I hear, I have never felt discrepancy between the graphite smudges on the stave and the "sound" in my head. Orchestrating, or instrumenting, I am somehow up on almost every blown, bowed, plucked, or hammered sound. When I, rarely, "hear" something whose instrumental elements escape me, I just sit it out, going over sections and choirs like a schoolboy till it comes.

Honeysuckle hanging in the nasal follicles, doubling in the brain. Neural rust. Elicits a "shadow horn" (Ives's "shadow violin" in Decoration Day), and I have my orchestral narrative shadowing

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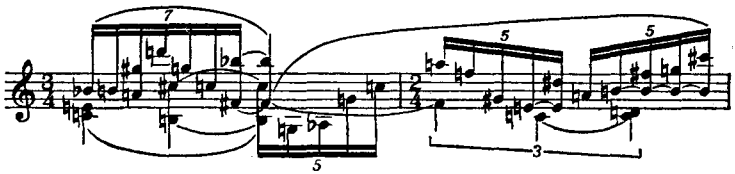
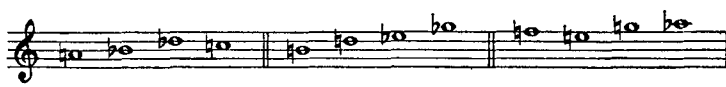


Baritone sounds from horn, bassoon, cello, transforming, as if under water, a serial current born in the overture foam and never absent, even in the silence which fills a gap in the row. Pacific. Continuity. Humanity. Genes.

Bonaparte's musing aria, "Robespierre, *fauve modeste*," as *secco* as a Mozart recitative, a carefully charged *Sprechstimme*, followed by a broken shadow of the row:



"Giii-nnah" (I can insert that call).

Three, four hours, I am still fresh.

Hand cramped. No erasures. Confident. I don't look back. This score will go.

2

I drive up 101 (El Camino Real) to get mail and library books at the University. A pretty, wise-faced, Chinese librarian, barefoot and mini-dressed, tells me they've moved the Mss. and shows me where. I take out Webern's Opus 5 (with the sonata movement in 55 bars), Eager S.'s String Concerto with its "motionless measures" (his term) and flutters of wind, some electronic gossip of Stockhausen (*Carée* with its pale glissandi at 67), and the latest *Die Reihe* (to up my adrenalin).

The mail is for Gina (envelopes bleeding impassioned afterthoughts: "Disregard stuff on TP—he just called from H's!!!"), Jeff-U (parietal instructions from Oberlin), an invitation to a McCarthy "Blow-Your-Mind" during the

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Convention (Chicago socialites in alert modulation; though not quite alert enough), a letter to my mother returned for misaddress (Santa Barbara instead of New York—no further comment today, gentlemen), and *The New York Review of* (Each Other's) *Books*, XI, 2, minus one of Eager's unearthly worldly Swan Songs of an Octogenarian. (My—of course secret—competitor.)

I flip through the *Review*, whose effect is to make me wish to top everything I read there except for the stravinskies, which are sheer joy. I read H. Morgenthau's harsh entombment of Robert Kennedy (the marble thrown at the corpse's head), admire its Tacitean errors (*capax imperii nisi imperasset*), but last Shakespeare's Birthday, in Indiana, I went on the campaign plane and made speeches (for what was not to be) to the Butler and Bloomington Music departments. ("We tried to get Irving Berlin," said Bobby.)

On the front cover, a Levine of Hubert Humph-er, knitting with barbed wire, crocodile tear hanging off left eye, fat face squinched half into John Garner, half into Mirabeau.

I feel left out. The music world is fierce but not half so fierce, not a tenth so populous with brains, pens, and venom as the literary-political world, and of course, not within light-years of influencing events or feelings. We have only our subversive time-schemes to insert in half-deafened men (fewer each year).

I don't know whether to leave the *Review* in the men's room (where I've cleared my roughage—alterted by Morgenthau's citation of Cromwell's "I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, to think it possible you may be mistaken") or to take it home to raise Velia's conversation level and keep her from her catalogs. Or—and this is what I do—take it downstairs for the lovely Chinese girl. (That accursed Exclusion Act which kept this great race of brains and beauties to so dangerous a minimum that the meeting of East and West will, at best, take place above the Dewline.) As she stamps the scores, I ask whether she'd like it.

Her face, scotched a bit at the cheeks (how smallpox must

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have devastated her fruit-picking ancestors), is now alight with sweetness; eyes, mouth, cheeks, even the ears tremble with response. But no words. A shrug: I dunno.

—It's pretty good this week. Gass on Lawrence, Morgenthau on Kennedy.

—I'm an Ag. Sci. major.

"That's life," I say. "Thank you," taking up my books, my *Review*, my marbles. I have an abnormally short torso and long legs; the turnstile, which she releases for me, strikes at the testicles, my torso hangs momently over. Ag. Sigh.

3

12:30. An hour and a half before my engagement.

In the Volkswagen, zipping past Sandspit Point, ten snooty palms surveying the bikinied beach, I suddenly want to see some pictures, I haven't been to the museum since '64, when Wilma Kitty and I surveyed it and each other in confused simultaneity.

I turn off the Freeway onto State and park around the corner from it. In the white courtyard. Greek vases, marble torsos ("after Praxiteles," "after Phidias"), limestone bodhisattvas, beaded, their small sweet breasts soliciting touch (but there are French tourists looking on).

There is a wall of aluminum-and-black-enamel panels, the trick being to arrange the squares so that the thread differs from section to section, making in-and-out peaks of reflected light, then diving in with a black-enamel cavern; handsome enough, more work than arranging groceries and, happily, unaleatory ("Arrange the blocks as you wish"). There's a splendid Zurbarán Franciscan (I remembered it), Tintoretto-lit, brooding, greenishly geometric. At the desk I buy Macedonian gold-coin earrings for Gina's sixteenth birthday next week.

The VW is being leaned on by a barefoot chicano who smiles at me easily, without apology. "Never apologize, never explain," the Balliol aristocrats were taught. Six hippies on

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the grass are passing a joint from pinched fingers to pinched fingers. One is a beautiful girl with a weeping willow head of hair who gives my long look a second look, pauses, looks too quickly away, but not before I recognize her as a Mullidyne.

4

"How," asks Patricia Davidov, "can you tell that the house has been burgled by a Pole?"

I am making a Greek cross for her verticality. We are between rounds on the second and, it turns out, penultimate day of our affair. "Well?"

"The garbage can's empty and the dog is pregnant." Her head rises from my stomach, and she gets a not-yet, not-ever-to-be-eliminated roll of my side flesh in her teeth, then licks. "Salty."

"Who," I respond, "was Alexander Graham Pucinski?"

"Mmm," she says, arching a long neck northward, till I lean southward far enough to place my tongue within her mouth. Small revival. I slide around on the pivot of my stomach. We are parallel, head to head. "Well?"

—Get in first.

—The first telephone Pole.

"Mmm," says Patricia, great knees up, great feet on my rear flanks. "What," she manages, "is a circle, huh, of, uh, Polish intellectuals. Oh. Called?"

"Oh, Patricia."

Three-o'clock Augustan sun through blinds. On the wall, sun-barred, a beautiful Japanese print of two ladies, hands on their frisbie-shaped hats, skirts blown up to show sandals like those by this bed, thongs between first and great toes.

—A dope ring. Now.

So be it.

But, oh, I am feeling it. Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance, but the capillaries of my rear bulge sorely, my mouth is clogged with canker sores, there is a drowsy numbness in my chest. By mentality Cyrenaic, I am in body Stoic.

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I flop. Patricia encircles me, front to my back, a divine burden, but a burden, a weight. "Had it?"

—Had it.

She plants hands on the sheets and in push-up position attempts a sweet abrasion.

I turn slowly, struggling. Embrace and kiss, deeply sweet. But my legs are weary, my gavel without authority. If I could represent the future in the present, storing away for the hundreds of unsolaced hours the abundance of Patricia, I would even vote for Richard Millstone Nix-no. But nix, but no, Heinz has not yet canned her goods.

5

Full moon. The tide chart says high tide is 9:45. From Miami, Nixon has spooned up the worst of cornball syrups, his plugging history, and received the cheers of the hard-hearted and the surface-sentimentalists. The rich dropout, Scranton (of P-ay), leans to Mrs. P. Ryan Nixon and forms the words "terrific," for he can't match such poorboy sagas. Nixon huddles with the newsmen, faking an intimacy his face can't manage.

From down Padaro Lane, Davy's friend Willy walks to tell us that the grunion will come streaming in to lay their eggs at 9:54. We go down the steps to the beach. The moon is there, plowing the water silver, we kick off moccasins and wait, Davy, Jeff-U, Willy, Ollendorf, and I. The waves roll toward us, lap each other, come to pitches, crash, lap each other, fan toward the shore, our feet, the steps, leaving behind bubbles of fringe. But no grunion. No grunion eggs. Perhaps the rigs of some of the men gathered in South Miami have let lethal oils slip into the channel. Or perhaps, when Nixon runs, the grunion don't.

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Exemplary Lives and Barbecues

Exemplary lives: Stripped of detail by model-seekers, the saints, heroes, and witnesses (Kierkegaard's men of significance) are reconstructed by the new democracy of neurosis: Everyone afflicted, the race is even. So new Bokes of Governors, Mirrors for Magistrates, Model Courtiers.

Webern. Banal except for his music and his death. The engineer-official father, the parochialism (though he conducted often in London), the poverty, the domination by and idolization of Schönberg, the friendship without (expressed) rivalry with Berg, the teaching and chorale-directing jobs (Jewish Blind, Workers' Chorus), the hated work in the operetta theater at Stettin, a couple of prizes from Vienna, the mountain-climbing, the uxoriousness, the absorption in children, then, broken by the Nazis (no funds for Jewish Blind, no Workers' Chorus), proofreader for his publisher, the war, air-raid warden, only son killed near Zagreb, he and wife pack rucksacks, age sixty, take to the roads to see their daughters, cooped up in house with son-in-law's parents, the sons-in-law return, Webern scarcely ever leaves house, timid, laconic, yet, September 15, son-in-law Mattl working the black market and currency exchange has found him a cigar, he goes to have dinner, the Americans set a trap. Webern lights up first cigar in years, goes outside to keep smoke away from grandchildren and is shot by stumbling North Carolina army cook (drunk, trigger-nervous), twice in abdomen, once in lung, stumbles into house. "It's over. I'm lost." Webern's wife denied pension, soldier claims Webern attacked him with iron bar, he shot in self-defense.

Exemplary?

Schönberg, dominating, fierce, teacher, writer (*Harmonielehre*, the *Letters*), painter, tennis player, world citizen, late father, excused by Austrians from military service (as was Lehar) after Loos, the architect, spurred by Webern and Berg, appealed; rejected, age seventy, by Guggenheim Foundation for grant to finish *Moses and Aaron* ("I have had some

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pupils of note... My compositions are..."), though pension from UCLA was seventy dollars a month, fading in L.A., which, said Mann, in the war was livelier than Paris had ever been (Vera Stravinsky concurring).

Stravinsky's life, looking in from outside, the finest, the intimacy with the best (known) of men, women, whiskeys, food, music, books, places (Vevey—Ravel down the street—Venice, Grasse, Hollywood), visiting the rest of the world, fine wives, children, but then, the mania for bowel talk, the materia medica, the morning headaches, the hypochondria (above the navel, the old seat of melancholy), the jousts with fakes, critics, imitators, thieves. The preference for thinking to understanding (the first continuity, the last conclusion), composing to composition (ditto). Yet in the Rio Zoo, before the anthropoids, he wonders "What it would be like to go about on all fours with one's behind in the air, and with a plaque on one's cage identifying one with a Latin binomial and a paragraph of false information." Is not the good fellow thus bravely exposed in those elegant books of R. Craft?

After my run on the beach in the dankest of all our Santa Barbara days, it strikes me I have been taken in by the charm, the silvery bustle, the off-the-cuff wit. (Glassy the currency of Bobsky and Eager?)

For us, heritors, auditors, watchers, better the laconic failures types (Giacometti, Webern), the mordant and silent (Schönberg and Pound), the fabling, courteous, twisted invalids (Proust, hiring men to torture rats in his presence), the maniacally narcissistic, vain, jealous, child-tortured (Beethoven, Joyce, Michelangelo), the clipped, snubbed, shunted, but world-relaxed (Mozart, Shakespeare), and finally, the old tea leaves, broken spars, drifted seaweed, odd roots and unforeseen shoots that make up, for better and worse, till death parts one, oneself.

2

Donald Taylor gives a farewell barbecue for himself (he's off to see his mother in Louisville). He lives in the gatehouse

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of the princely Gossett estate, more or less watching the place while the princes Gossett stay in their château in Normandy. The party takes place in the Orangerie, the company larger and more menacing than I'd guessed it would be: Donloubies (triumphant at the confession of Mrs. Wrightsman, their release from having to depart), Mullidynes, Krappells, a Count and Countess Czaski, he, the piano player in the Hotel Biltmore, infinitely more musical than the musicological jaws. Amazingly enough, Donald has invited the lower half as well. Davidov is in evening sandals (over white socks) and a shirt he wore only twice this week, Patricia is pale but triumphant, her clumsy beauty contrives a modest slink, to me she is distant, ridiculous, "How GOOD to see YOU again." (It's like publishing banns.)

Davidov clumps up darkly, a smiling menace, "Hear you and Pat had coffee together."

"I don't drink coffee." That golden pump has sprung a leak. In order to call for home repairs? (Every story is a minor detail of another story as the librettist of *Walpole's Love* well knows.)

The moon is like an advertisement for the Orangerie. It sits low, reddish, almost full, it lacks only a Gossett gardener to belong exclusively to us. We mill around bushes carrying glasses of gin and quinine, picking limes and lemons, Donald, nervous, tinnily cyclopean, stuttering, rallying everywhere with ice bowls, soda, a silver bowl of caviar and lemon. I turn around a jacaranda tree, smell its vanilla and honeysuckle bark, think of Walpole at Strawberry Hill, his editor, Wilmarth Lewis, Jackie Kennedy's uncle, in Farmington. Life's princes. *Crack*. Agony in my ear.

"Lover."

Pat, body shadowed behind the odorous trunk, has kissed into my ear.

"Cheeeristpat," I yell—under control—in whisper.

"Shhh." Lips on mine. She has on a white dress, sleeveless —though the night is cool to chill—cut in the classic female V so her body dominates everything. In the moonlight, she is the lit-up movie screen.

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Sure enough, eye never off her, the smirking, tortured torturer, Davidov. "Playing games, kiddies?" Mousing over in sandals.

—Human flesh in moonlight, Bert. You've seen *Figaro*.

"Sloppero," said Davidov. "Why not get out of the cold, Pattie? They're serving up steaks in the house."

—Scat outta here, Bertie, you make me sick, like some private eye or somethin', always trailin' me around, Christ.

Behind silver glasses, a dog's low look. Its fury is driven, by his wife's excited beauty, at himself, then at me. "Don't lick his crumby hide. He can't write his way out of a paper bag. Derivative, sloppy, and look at him, the ex-chorus boy."

This is a coward who will fight. I am a coward who almost won't. But am big, even strong, and say with Gary Cooper-quiet, Bogart-menace, "Be a good idea to cut that out, Bert. A kiss on the ear isn't a week on Capri. And I'm a little sensitive about my work. I know you're a great critic of the art, but I know a little bit myself. I'd just as soon we saved debate for another time." Or some such put-off drivel, the speech, as usual, feeding on itself, hardly related to the heavy breathing, the sense of each of us—I'm sure—that our hearts were thumping our ribs, dangerous to all over thirty-five, especially to three running-to-fat types like us.

Pat, cheated down below, transfers her energy and cracks Bert's cheek, the sound is a snare drum, *thwack*, over the garden.

—Hey.

—Wha' was that?

This through the lemon and lime trees. Pat retreats. Bert moaning low, doggily, on his knees, feels for his glasses. I edge away from Pat's exit toward the servants' garden, feeling my way to a plaster cast of Bacchus and Cupid, onto the Old California porch, past pots hanging from its ceiling, into the house, where Krappell, mouth pink with blood juice, delivers to Velia, Mullidynes, Donloubies, and the remote, petite Czaskis his old prediction that the Czech film-makers were the harbingers of the Dubcek revolution. "The movie-in-the-round, every man in the driver's seat.

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The psychological anticipation of the end of serfdom."

Old Count Czaski, small, red-faced, a chuckler and man of spirit, says, "Much as I love Charlot, I would have wished they had never brought the cinema to Prague if it had such terrible effects." The Count escaped in 1939, taking out nothing but a pair of dueling pistols whose sale in London enabled him to keep his family for a year. Now he is suing the Polish government for his stables and furniture. The Countess studies law books, writes letters to U Thant, Gomulka, Ambassador Gronowski, Dean Rusk, the Quai d'Orsay. Without a typewriter, on Woolworth stationery which her spidery script dignifies to parchment. She receives no answers. Only Czaski's Biltmore clientele pays attention to him. Mrs. Sears, a cousin of Woodrow Wilson, drinks brandy Alexanders with him every night after "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" and the E-flat Polonaise. He had complained about the old Baldwin stand-up he was forced to play, and last Christmas, she'd given him a six-thousand-dollar Steinway which he leases to the Biltmore.

Donald's steaks are marvelous. Davidov is vegetarian. One of the world's brutes, he has the habits of a saint. Dark, brooding, he bears his misery into the room, a billboard. Pat creeps after, thank God for noisy Krappells. Count Czaski tries to immerse Patricia in Polish memories. She says, "Know who Alexander Graham Pucinski is? The first telephone Pole." The most boorish patron of the Biltmore has never told the Count a Polish joke.

End of Summer

I

Signs. August 4, summer's height, the sun halfheartedly (cloudily) sweeping the coastal fog out of the cove and lawns. I look out the great-glass rectangle of ocean front and see a single magnolia leaf fall lawnward. Last night, I heard what I thought was a man's voice saying, "No, thank you," thought

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in fury, "Velia's got someone in here," turned over, saw it was Velia herself, talking in one of the strange sleep voices that have for years made the nights theatrical for me. (Gina, too, is a great sleep talker; many a night I have laughed to hear, room to room, these fragments of sleep talk, almost dialogue.)

2

Yesterday, Mina, the Golden Triangle, made her first solo drive on the Freeway, stayed with us, and went out to swim at midnight with Jeff-U. Skinny two months ago, Jeff-U has added tan to muscle, his idleness has paid off. He is quite an admirer of his body, hugs himself, partly to articulate the muscles, partly to enjoy himself. And tonight he enjoys another body. They go down bare-arse, I watch from my magnolia-veiled window and almost get charged up enough myself to wake Velia up for discharge; but don't, and twenty minutes later, when they return and slip around to the back lawn, I shift to the kitchen window and watch them embrace. There is much beautiful mingling, but despite knee-raising and other somewhat-educated hints from the Belle Triangle, Jeff-U remains—as far as the not very good sight of them permits my knowledge—innocent of the triangle's contents.

All is sign, felt prevision of the end of summer, this easy absence from Chicago life where I seldom bother to buy newspapers, have not read *The New York Times* in two months, listen to the distant noise of politics as bird gabblings on morning air. What's the difference, I think. Even that old con man Nixon—whose Cheshire smile passed right through me at Newark Airport a few months ago—has been ground into reasonable enough shape by American life to make him palatable; even the slick little dollie, Reagan, will speak as many right as wrong answers. Though could I think long enough, I'd moan here, just two months from and eighty miles north of the struck-down Bobby. (Of our house of Atreus with its new patents of nobility: books, beauty, sailboats, poems, the public weal. Oh happy oedipal bloom: Ritt

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has remembered Joseph Kennedy negotiating for RKO, had seen him with local beauties while the gracious daughter of Honey Fitz told her beads and raised the children. Though Lord knows how well it worked out for us all. Us all?)

On the campaign plane, late April, yet zero weather, tornado weather in Indiana, Bobby came in after John Glenn (the pure-eyed astronaut elated by his world tour for Royal Crown Cola). Blue suit, blue hooded eyes, mouth latent with smile over squirrel teeth, graceful, dear little fellow, working the crowds like a medieval jongleur, feeling every response as new energy for the old themes. That last day of life, out on Santa Monica beach, an hour south of this one, diving into waves to scoop a son from the undertow, banging his head, weary football of the lights and American noise, which, that night, would be irremediably punctured. Two months ago today.

Life flies by so quickly, "a field mouse in the grass," sped by that hourly communication of event about which Wordsworth complained in 1800, separating us from every precious thing in our lives. We are so full of the world, this great age of wounding and repairing, moving for movement's sake. Hoping feeling will stick.

An almost impossible time for an artist.

At a Contemporary Music Jamboree in Flagstaff, Arizona, I went to the annual exhibit of Indian arts at the museum. There among the Hopi sand paintings and Navajo rugs, pots, jars, and turquoise pins, sat the old men and women who made them. I elbowed through a sportive crowd to a silent, pipe-smoking Indian gentleman who sat on a kitchen chair beside his wooden name plate, smiled, said how much I admired his work, and then, threw in, "It's not easy being an artist in America."

Perhaps his English was poor, the noise too great. The question could not mean the same for him (hadn't I asked it more or less to have an anecdote for the exhibit?) His look did not differentiate my white-jacketed self from what it hoped to be distinguished from.

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3

Mid-August, our beach shakes with autumnal tides which strip the sand and expose more and more of the smooth rocks. In winter, the neighbors tell us, the shore is all rocks. Even now we spread towels and beach seats behind a narrowing sand fortress, and still dig out rocks which press on rear and ribs. Television tells us that Kosygin and Brezhnev have been summoned from vacation to a full Presidium meeting, and, that night, the results of the interruption are announced: troops are marching into Czechoslovakia. Johnson, enormous face grooved by depths nothing in his life or reading prepared him for, returns from a fierce speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Detroit to confront advisers summoned from their own long weekend in Virginia and Chevy Chase. (Johnson advisers, unlike Kennedy's, do not, apparently, stray as far as the Vineyard, though my ex-colleague, Katzenbach, has ventured there, to be assailed in the local gazette by literary sideswipes from the off-season editor-writers from New York.)

For the last ten days, we have new neighbors, the Loves, up from Louisiana, father and eight or ten children by three wives (all absent, he's separating from Number Three). The children saturate the length of beach between the felled eucalyptus and the bluff from which it fell. They come in with surfboards, polynesian bikinis, mattresses, rainbow towels. The loveliest of them speaks Cajun French with me, "*Que voy que zhe zire, cherie?*" and to this cane sugar nineteen-year-old with her flawless Sea and Ski-oiled body, the old music perfesser says, "*Que tu m'adorasse, m'belle.*" She and another of the stepsisters (the tangle of marriages is as complicated as the kelp which meduses the end of the bared tree) are shopping and cooking for the mob of Loves, Williston-Loves, and Freers. "It's lahk the quahtuhmaster caw." Her father, it turns out, owned the beach before Donloubie, was raised in the Villa Leone, and the real-estate advice I've passed him ("The bank buys the property, in five years you sell, pure gold."), he politely lets fly over his head. He stretches, auxili-

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ary bellies mounting to the volcanic navel, and asks if I've read *African Genesis*. I haven't, but concede the events of the day make me think more of sharks defending territory than modern nations. He hasn't heard the news of the Russian move on Prague, nor of the innocently forked address of our President talking of great powers crushing the will of free peoples; he's given up the boob tube's hourly communications.

The sugar cane turns her oiled belly and says, "Daddy, you doan do nothin' but sleepn read."

"Readin' I enjoy, sleep I need," and he tells me, from his Kremlinic isolation, of the good relations down his way between Negroes and Whites. One would think the last years had seen him at a permanent eight thousand feet above the delta.

I tell him our smart black cleaning woman is supporting Wallace because he tells it straight and nasty.

—It's best to know whah you stand.

I agree, though on my other flank the disturbing beauty peeks a smile out from under her lambent arm. She has loved Bobby Kennedy, she can't figgah out that man Nixon, she thinks after leaving Sophie Newcomb she'll fahnd some perfesser to marry and lead a good life goin' different places every summer, she loves travelin', learned maw in Colombia up in the mountains with Indians the term she was on probation, than she's evah done.

Jeff-U and Gina are part of the Loves' night parties, they swim in the midnight surf. Tonight—I say this for both my flanks—I will swim myself, will risk turning pumpkin, rat, or tubercular; my hope is to draw my sugar-caned left flank down from her party to a strange once-in-a-lifetime moment with the transient perfesser. Why not? Twenty-one years separate us, but in this smorgasbord age of kinky love, what is this but digested bread and water? (In Jeff-U's new *Playboy*, Kinsey's assistant, Pomeroy, tells of a "mild-mannered man" who'd had relations with seventeen members of his immediate family, including father and grandmother, and had gone on from this good training to most varied experience among the

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world's flora and fauna. What's your preference?" asked Pomeroy. "Women," was the rapid, surprising answer. "But," reflecting, "the burro is very, very nice.")

That night, the house quiet, I flip on Sackerville's playful outside spotlights and make my way down the sixty-nine stairs. It is dark below the reach of the shore light, I feel along the banister and, on the newel, brush Love's bourbon glass onto a surfboard. It cracks, my big toe steps, is cut, bleeds. I howl, furious, but take off my trunks and run off the pain along the shore. The tide is starting to flow back, but the beach is still wide enough, the lights and waves oil it to lubricity, I run five laps and plunge in. The water is rollicking, warm, intimate. I lie on my back, rock, stare at the starred gauze. The shore outline is a recumbent dragon, no, a turkey. I try not to await, but I await another body on the steps, removing the Polynesian strips from the generous doves and happy wedge. I wait, I roll, I loll, swim, and, by God, I hear hum-bump, hum-bump, and make out a figure on the steps, a girl, the legs buckling in, the hips swaying. I swim up, "Hi," yell I. "Hi thah."

"Who's that?" calls Gina. "Dad? You swimming too?"

Something in the region of my heart dives through something like my intestines, slaps my bare gonads, sinks in my bowels. "No, dear, I'm just cleaning off my rump. Throw me my trunks there from that stump." You clump.

Upstairs, I sit in the—except for the colored-television light—dark and hear that President Svoboda, broadcasting from a hidden radio station, has asked the Russians to release Premier Dubcek and leave the country. There has been scattered fighting, the people in Prague, filmed by their television cameras, gather in the squares, sit in front of tanks, the iron muzzles wave over their heads.

While Velia snores I read in a Sackerville anthology Dr. Browne's vaunting cliché that the world he regards is himself, "the Microcosme of mine owne frame ... my life, which to relate were not a History, but a peece of poetry ... that masse of flesh that circumscribes me, limits not my mind."

Dumbhead boast.

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Gina, back up, watches the late show, one cell of the electronic plasmodium. Some cosmos.

Outside, magnolia leaves and canary-headed flowers on the vine against the window lit by the reading lamp. Beyond, night and ocean, *what lasts*, extinguished by reflections of the room, the electric clock-radio, the sleeping Velia, my work papers, india rubbers, pens and ink cones, the anthology (plasmodium for Dr. Browne), score paper, stylus, my own bulging head, bed, ashtray, cigars, wallet, checkbook, maps, and, source of the reflected deception, the lamp itself.

4

I am to meet Pat at the Safeway parking lot again. The "scene" with Bert has intervened since our rendezvous-making, yet, last night, no signal passed between us, no note of cancellation. We parted without handshake or acknowledgment. But, a man of my word, I will show up on the asphalt, ready, mind and body.

I do. I wait. Ten minutes, twenty. Five minutes more. No Pat. I turn the ignition key. The state is restored, family, morality, ultimate sense. But now, my need is large, pressing. I pull up two parking places from the exit, go change a dollar into dimes, and telephone from a glass booth by the market.

"Hell-O." Bert.

I must hang up, but a lifetime of nonwaste and, yes, straightforwardness inhibits. I cannot even disguise my voice. I but soften it. "Hello."

—Oh, it's you. I suppose you're making a shack-up time with Patty.

—Whatinchrisname you talking about?

—Fuck you. Stumblebums his way through elementary harmony and thinks he can fill every hole in California.

—You miserable dung-heap Davidov. Wadda think your wife's legs are gaping for if you weren't such a hopeless dragass and shitmouth. "Don't hurt me," "don't hurt me," and the next day you're coming on like Mussolini. Christ, I can see why these rubes around here won't give up guns,

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lice like you rushing around waiting to be crushed.

—You want to try a little crushing there, Wendt? You just wanna try something?

I am blowing sky high. This glass is fogged with my heat. My glasses (I use them for driving but haven't taken them off) are fogged by it. The physiology of rage.

There's another element. At the newsstand, I bought this morning's *New York Times*, thirty cents, flown in the same day. First time this summer, a treat to remember what the great world's about. And what happens? Agony. There's a big We're for McCarthy Ad, painters, writers, musicians, entertainers, the "health professions" (to spare the feelings of dentists and veterinarians), and lo and behold, I, a McCarthy supporter now, haven't been sent it, have been sent an Artists for Humphrey (but that's because they can't get many), but apparently they have enough Musicians for McCarthy not to need me. Half the lousy composers of New York are there, there's even a Wendt I never heard of, probably some stage designer, but me, am I fallen this low, that on a list of a thousand artists, I'm not there? So I sat cramped in the miserable VW, my body steaming for Pat, my head raging at exclusion.

And so stayed in that glass booth by the Safeway market ready to tear Davidov's guts out, wrong though I am. And challenge him. "Here I am, you sac of envy. Creep. Come and get me." Though don't tell him where; nor does he ask. He comes back with throaty gurgles, and I say, "Spit it out, Davidov. Cough it out, you slime."

Three feet away, I see, waving at me, out of some Hal Wallis movie of the thirties, Gus, Davy, Gina, Velia, and Jeff-U. Fog, sweat, my face parboiled. The fish is hooked, cooked, and yet alive. Davidov breaks through his gurgle and splits the phone with a yell. An unearthly yell, they must hear it outside the booth, I have to hold the receiver a foot from my ear. I grind my mouth into the speaker and say, "Davidov, if I see you, I'll turn you over to the De-Lousing Squad. I'm taking to the Public Prints if you ever dare drop your pissy pen on a sheet of paper. I'll expose you to the

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Chancellor, you watch your step or I'll shoot the guts out of your fat head. Tell your wife to zip your prick to her arse, I have had it with her, I wouldn't touch a cunt you touched with a revolver. Fuck you eternally," and put the receiver gently back, emerge from the glass tank, sweating triumphantly.

"WELL, what was that all about?" asks smart-eyed, rather pretty Velia.

—I forgot to turn in a report on the chamber group it's the deadline I was cussing the secretary for not reminding me I told her fifteen times I needed cigars from the market here I couldn't go up to the Havana Nook. This town heat is killing me!

"It's not hot here," said Velia. "You're just overagitated by little things."

By Bei Wendt

I

September 6.

House empty. I'm orchestrating Scene 7. The sergeant is telling the girl about Walpole and Mary Berry. It is his first sure sense of his own love. Dry recital, but I want caverns of love music under it. There are woodwind choirs, all breathy, then a solo cello breaking into, stopping, breaking into, stopping, and finishing out the declaration. When the girl speaks, I have Miss Berry's music in back of her, but in plucked violins, flute, vibraharp, wood percussions. The sergeant is shadowed by Walpole, by Napoleon (who read the letters to Madame Du Deffand en route to Moscow), yet is held in by commentary music and by the tone-row spine shifted from choir to choir, instrument to instrument.

An hour, two hours, more. I keep lighting and relighting the Muriel blunt, chewing Sour Cherry gum, tossing my neck, working with Jeff-U's wrist-strengthener. My scores are neat. It is a crucial condition of getting played in our time. A slob elsewhere, I am a beautiful scorer, copyist. I love these

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notes, I make quarter-rests like a cinquecento Flamand, I rule my crescendos into beauteous horns, I rank with the better calligraphers, if not composers, of midcentury.

The telephone. Ignored. It persists. The house must be empty. I've worked long enough.

I answer it. A boy for Gina. I shut up shop, brush the amoebic curls of india rubber into my wastebasket (*Embarkation for Cythera* in rounded tin), put my pens in the red earthenware jug from Arezzo (bought at the museum there after a joint concert with Dallapiccolo), add my score sheets to the flat-top snowy mountain. The phone shoots off again. And again for Gina, Loretta Cropsey. I tell her Gina's at, I think, the Point, hang up, and hear from the first floor Gina calling, "Hi."

She comes upstairs, I go to her room with her, deliver messages, cannot say who the boy was— "Dad, I've asked you to get the names of callers"—lie on her bed while she cuts up skirt material and pins it, puts on Aretha Franklin, "Love Is a See-Saw," a very good singer, the music wretched, stiff stuff, put Gina's shell ashtray on my bare chest (I have a convenient cavity), smoke out my Blunt, and listen to her morning picaresque. Gina gives the lie to Beast City, she wanders everywhere, speaks to everyone, gets invited for coffee, tells them easy lies, "I'm from Omaha, my parents are French, my father's a mechanic, wounded in the war, I'm a first-year student at UC," and so on. The day's bag is, "I went to the Point, it was beautiful, I swam, read *Portrait of a Lady*" (my birthday gift to her, along with the earrings), "a well-dressed Negro, quite good-looking, about twenty-five, asked me what I was doing out of school, he was a truant officer. I told him school hadn't started for me. He wasn't a truant officer, he recruits people for jobs. He said he only liked to swim with flippers, and someone had taken his flippers off his boat, would I have breakfast with him tomorrow and go swimming." I shaking my head, but with Gina in front of me, this pure dear fruit of girl, what is there to say? We are surrounded with rapists, head-crackers, she wanders on like a nymph in a pastoral. She went into the

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enclosure with the Recreation Director, a bored physiology student, "quite good-looking," he was working on heart banks, enter a policeman who "asked me if I was a hippie," said he hated them, had been at the Convention last week, he hated Paul Newman, but when Shirley MacLaine had walked in he'd said, "Come on in, honey." "You sure you're not a hippie?" She'd played chess with the physiologist, had been beaten in ten moves, "he was very bright," then ran into Ollendorf at the Unique and was driven home. "A great day."

2

Saturday, September 7.

I wake at seven-thirty, eyes amidst the darkening green of the Tree of Heaven, a trimmable branch of which loops over the second-floor porch and, in a stiff breeze, scrapes the window screen. There is no breeze, the day has the pure deep gleams of an early-fall day here. Shall I put on sneakers and run in the backyard? Or down toward Dorchester, dodging the glass bits, the dog-shit, the paper bags and Seven-Up bottles left by Friday's school lunchers? No.

But I go barefoot downstairs, open the door to the empty, tree-caverned street. I do ten quick bends in front of the rubber-banded cylinder that is my day's key, the Chicago *Sun-Times*.

Inside, I fill the coffee pot with water and Stewart's Regular Grind, plug in, slide off the rubber band, make a pitcher of orange juice, and glance at the Cubs (the team's Methuselah, two-years-younger-than-I Ernie Banks, has hit his twenty-ninth homer, his biggest total in eight years, good sign for us oldsters). The first page gives Mayor Daley's rapid-fire defense of his elegant behavior at the Democratic Convention, with illustrations of black-widow spiders, razor-bladed tennis balls, and the dented police helmets victimized by these occult and more-than-occult weapons. (Chicago-loving Dick, so monolithic of conviction he will not grasp that television did not register him as the sow's ear without some help.) Onto the whirl of yesterday, I could be reading

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the Fugger News Letters, the variations would be in detail only. (Viva Detail.)

Two cups of coffee, I weaken during Two and spread pumpernickel with saltless butter and urinous peach preserves.

Upstairs, Gus and Davy watch Saturday's horror cartoons, Gina is at Loretta Cropsey's for the night, I wash, shave, and climb another story to the study, why don't I call it "workshop"? There sits the pile of worded notes (noted words?). Slag?

Will some twenty-second-century genius, brooding over "the pastoral, thoughtful, tolerant twentieth century," think of Walpole's farewell aria to Miss Berry and hum its pathetic, chromatic, synthetic loveliness as he plugs in the universal music computer and tunes in on the tonal events of Galaxy Scribble?

I proceed with orchestration, do three pages, rather joyfully, working with end-of-spectrum instruments, double bassoon and piccolo, these bearing melodic burdens while strings and brass police the side streets.

Down the hall, Jeff-U's door is shut. Last night I would not let him take the car because the night before he'd gone to Arlington Park, lost money (his affair), and kept the car until two thirty A.M. (mine). I was waking at each sweep of car light down the street and met him in fury at the door. We had harsh words, rare these last weeks.

He is stretched out endlessly in bed, feet and neck out of his blue quilt, just the way my father, grandfather, and I sleep: unblanketable Wendts.

I lift the hand weights ten or twelve times, regarding the musculature—already softened in the two weeks since our return, or so it seems to me. Jeff-U's pants, shirts, underpants, socks, weights, magazines, and papers litter the room. At his graduation last June, I tried to persuade him that high-school essays on the Economy of Chile were not immortal witnesses to his intellectual power, but here they be; his slag. Posters of Einstein and—in color—the Bernini Vatican Plaza dominate two walls, the rest have a Dürer rabbit, an ink sketch of Arezzo by Maniera (which he gave Jeff after I played at the

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concert in sixty-three, Jeff-U's first appearance at a Wendt concert), and a panel of a Tree of Jesse from either Chartres or Lincoln (stained glass is his forte, not mine).

"Please don' lif' weights here now." Mumble from the bed.

—Sorry.

I sit on the edge of his bed and pat his head, a harsh tangle of brown hair. I rub that a bit, his skull is narrow under the hair. He loves to be rubbed and tickled (another Wendtism), and I rub his shoulders. Unblemished, soft skinned, very strong, tan. The little boy who's spent seventeen-plus years in Wendt houses and in one week leaves for college. Yes, a classic scene, but I surrender to it, I play my part. (We fit into such a small repertory.) Back against the wall, I rub his shoulders. *Der Rosenkavalier* flies up from WFMT below, I stare out, through and above the trees, and remember life with Jeff-U, the frightening announcement by letter from Velia—would we have lasted that first year if it hadn't come?—the room in—was it Cherbourg?—she on her way home, I to stay to finish up with Boulanger, the long birth, twenty-six hours in the American Hospital, the noise of carnival drunks below the window, my first sight of the brilliant bright eyes, the heart-wrenching child, how many thousand hours, playing, reciting Dante, whistling Bach, while I held the bottle for him, teaching him to throw, to bat, to serve, driving with him around Italy and England, with Gina, with Davy and Gus, with Velia, the boy becoming himself, thinning, hardening, his will becoming his own, his lies, his sweetness, swimming in the Neckar, not wanting to go away, staying always with us, no camps, no schools away, reading *I Promessi Sposi*, saving ball cards, climbing in the Dolomites, life, middle-class-American-Wendt life, one of the earth's three billion, one of its hundred million lucky ones, one of my four children, my one and only, unique at least in this, Jeffrey Ulrich Wendt. So long, my dear boy, fare thee well, dear heart. The *Rosenkavalier* dies away, my hand rests on his shoulder, I pat his blanketed rear twice and leave.

—Thanks, *mon père*.

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Dick Gallup

Dawn Poem

Here the noiseless mind
Is like a quiet wind
Blowing across the mottled stones
Of some monument or other

The eye registers the stain
Blue dots on a green field
Long legs in a slope
A self-conscious arm
Draped around the shoulders
Of a sovereign in light blue

Free squares of turquoise
Revolve about the sphere
Making bowls of the sky

We rub together then
With the stones of another day
And though no sparks appear
A general warmth surrounds us

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Dive Bomber

You flop down into the personal
Like a triumph of years standing on end
Before the coming of the horse
Or the blank stare of infancy
Turning on and off.
It's day
It's night.
Who's to say the rooms decay
Paint fades and sunlight roils
Across my divan "comme le vent"
Blowing up to and on the bridge
Which sags like an old mattress.
We'll have to buy a new one.

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The Sharpest Knives in the World

Are not as sharp as you
On the girders of
the fenders of my car

Back room full of tiny loves
In air-tight sacks on the lacquered floor

Sea Night Sand
Innumerable scratches on the shore
Like an old alley shot toward the stars

The door is new and creaks
The room within is fine
For days and days

And finally it is like falling in love with no one
Busting through the bursts and gusts of life
To where I sit
At a desk

Looking into the grain

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Poem for Outer Mongolia

The weight falls downward of its own volition
Bringing to the ground its iron embrace
As in pictures of ancient ball players
Who imagine a string tied to the palms of their hands
Full of push corpuscules which break the air
Like divisions of Nazi storm troopers

The grate is full and the music goes on
Filling the room with aqua-marine
The walls are blue and reflect on the door
White snow falls silently beyond
And far beyond that live the nomads
Whose generations are like the wind

The blue heavens cover the roof cup
The music floats up the flue into the sky
Mingled with smoke and soot and the aspiration
Of all mankind to make war
As hard as rain from the blue sky
Falling of its own volition on you

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René Ricard

Mannerism

These are the problems which inhabit the imagination
Tincture of opium, redolent eucalyptus balm
The constituent order fails
At any attempted rescue, the end of a soft brown epoch

Some things were marvelous: Bring on the Byzantine
The gilded orient spoiling Venice's moldy sewer
"Why must they build their capitals on swamps?"
Paris! London! Moscow!

We find the remaining fragments bizarre
It's the mulch of the Cul de Sac
Tempting our languor with that dead clutter sensation
"I'm like a fallow field."
The party's over and we remember this.

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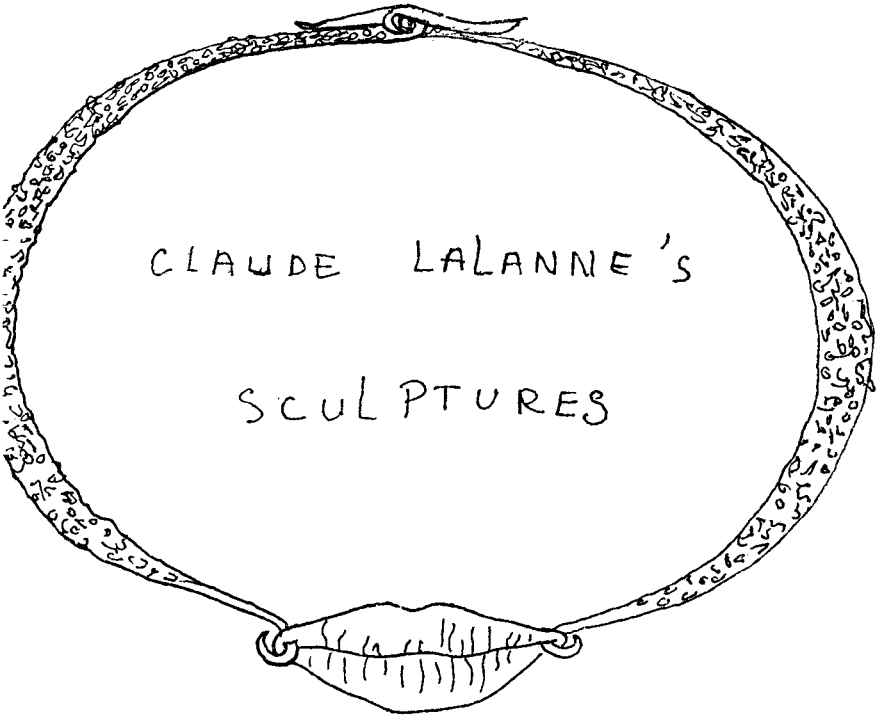

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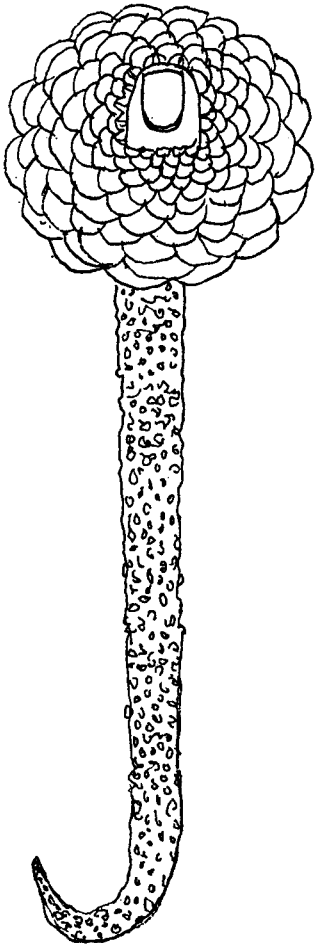
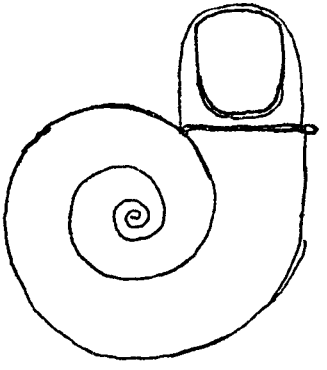
GOOD LUCK CHARM



THUMB SNAIL



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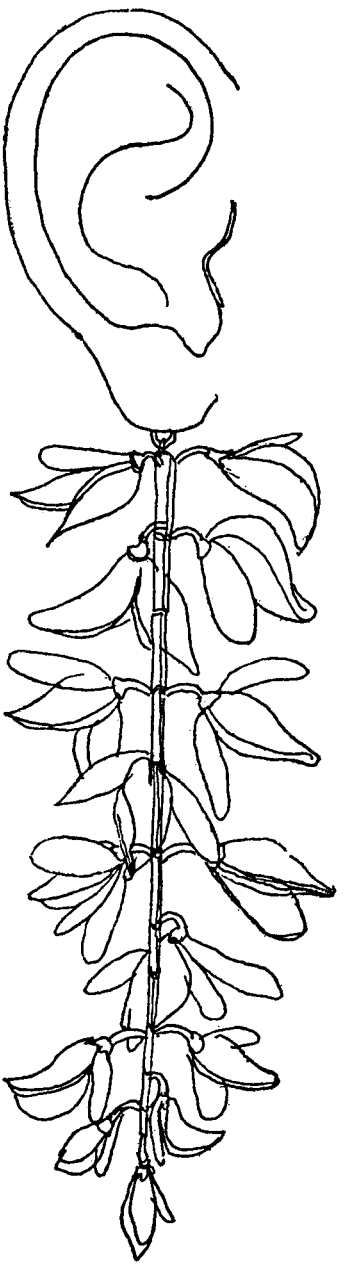
FOR YOUR EAR

a GOLDEN EAR -



and a

STRAND OF

WISTERIA -

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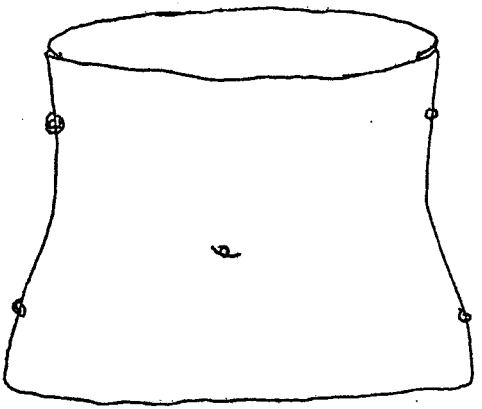
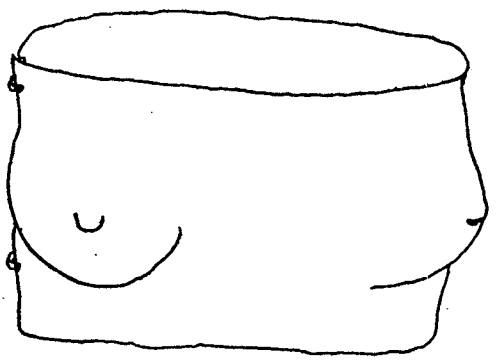
I CAST YOUR WAIST_



AND YOUR BUST_



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YVES SAINT LAURENT

MADE ONE DRESS

FOR THE WAIST_

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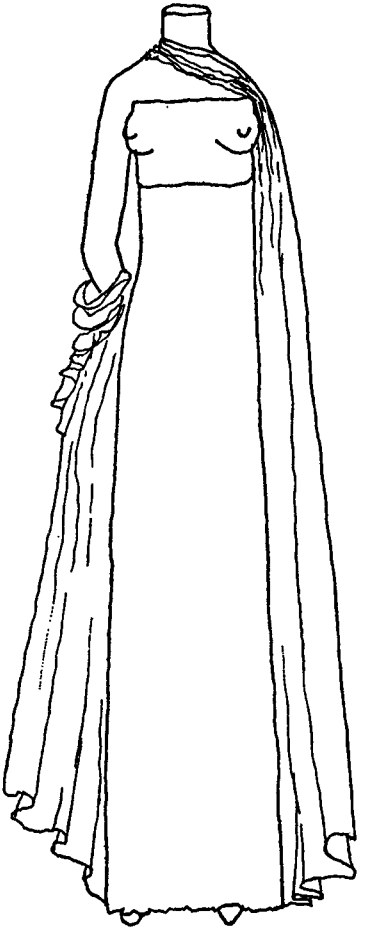
AND ANOTHER FOR THE BUST -



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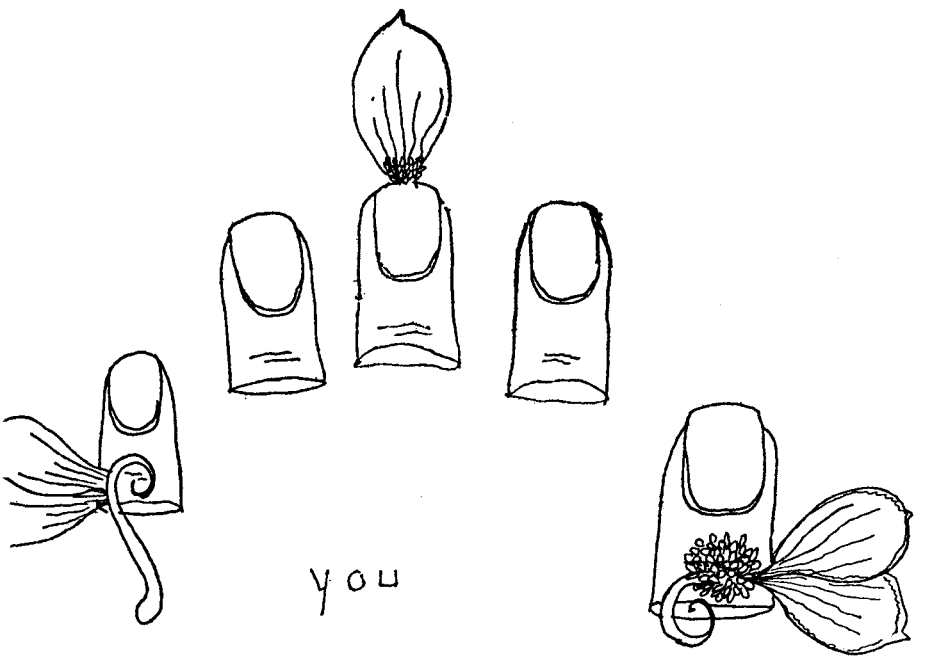
HERE ARE JEWELS

FOR THE HAND



YOU

PUT THESE GOLDEN THIMBLES

ON YOUR FINGERTIPS_

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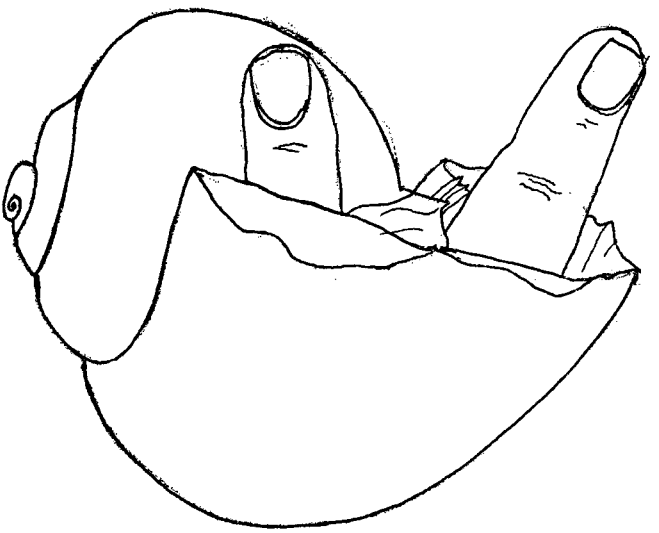

TO WARD OFF

BAD LUCK.

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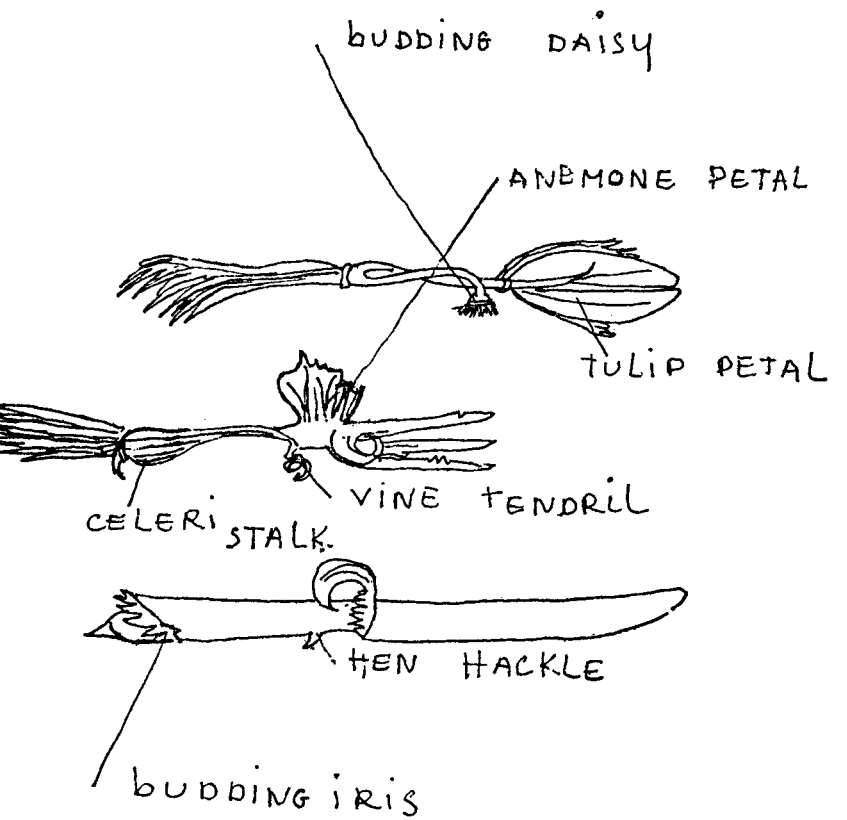
FORKS, SPOONS

AND KNIVES

OF GOLD-PLATED SILVER



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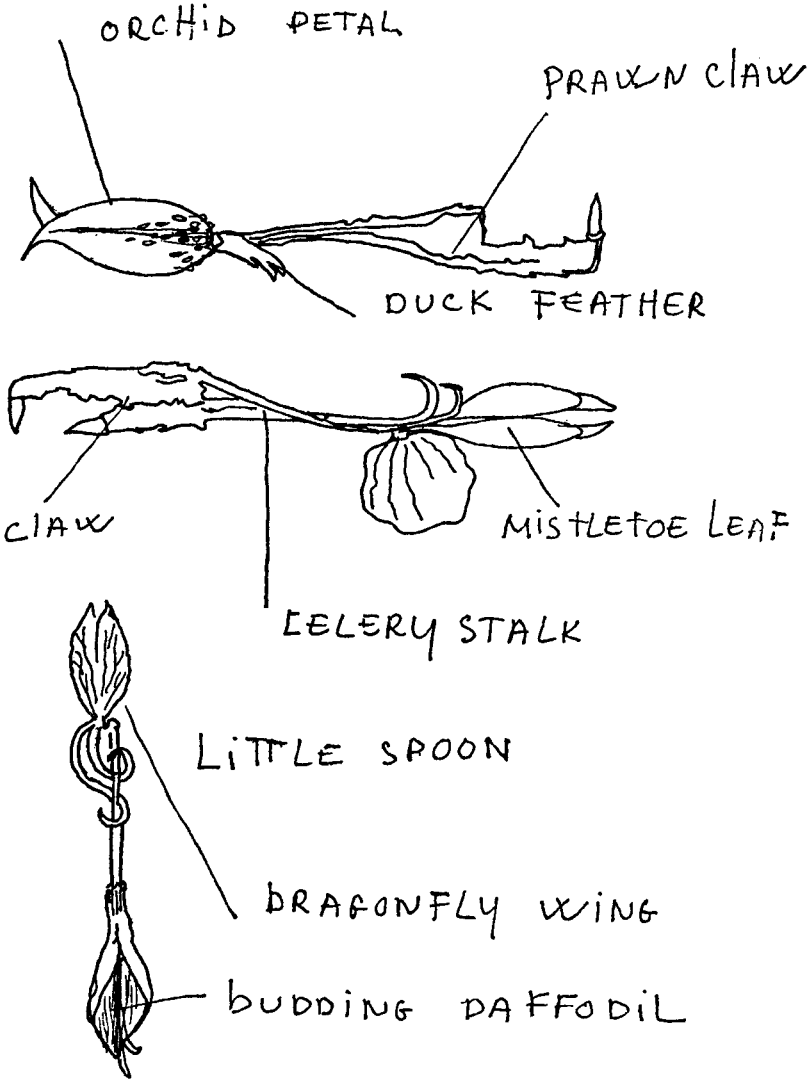
For the Fish course



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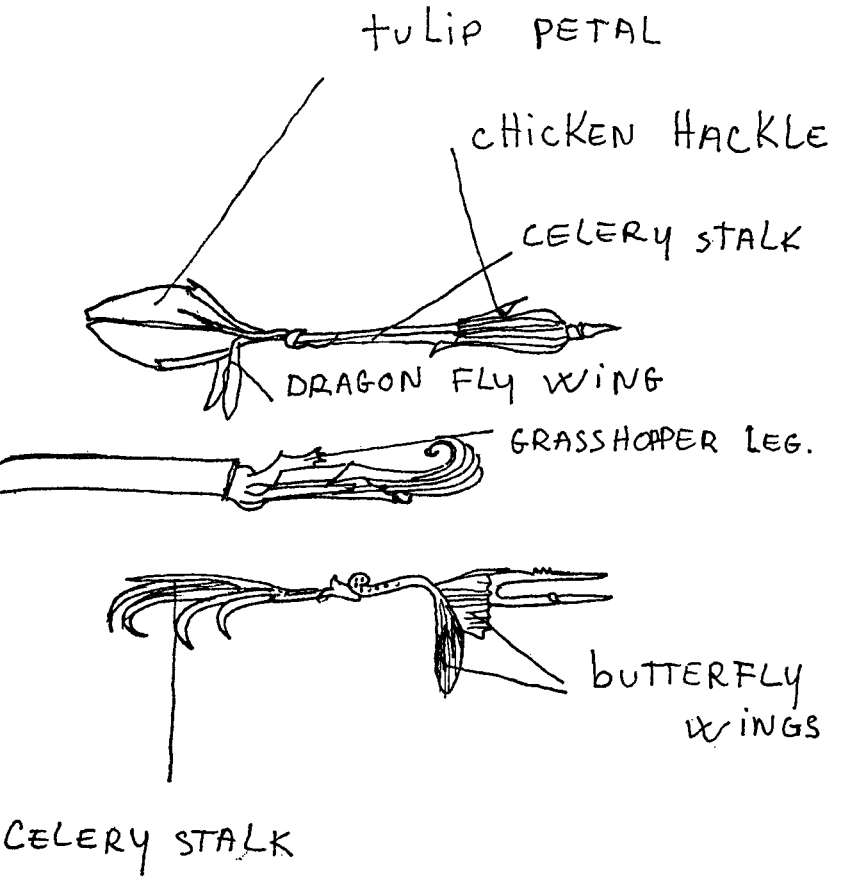
FOR DESSERT



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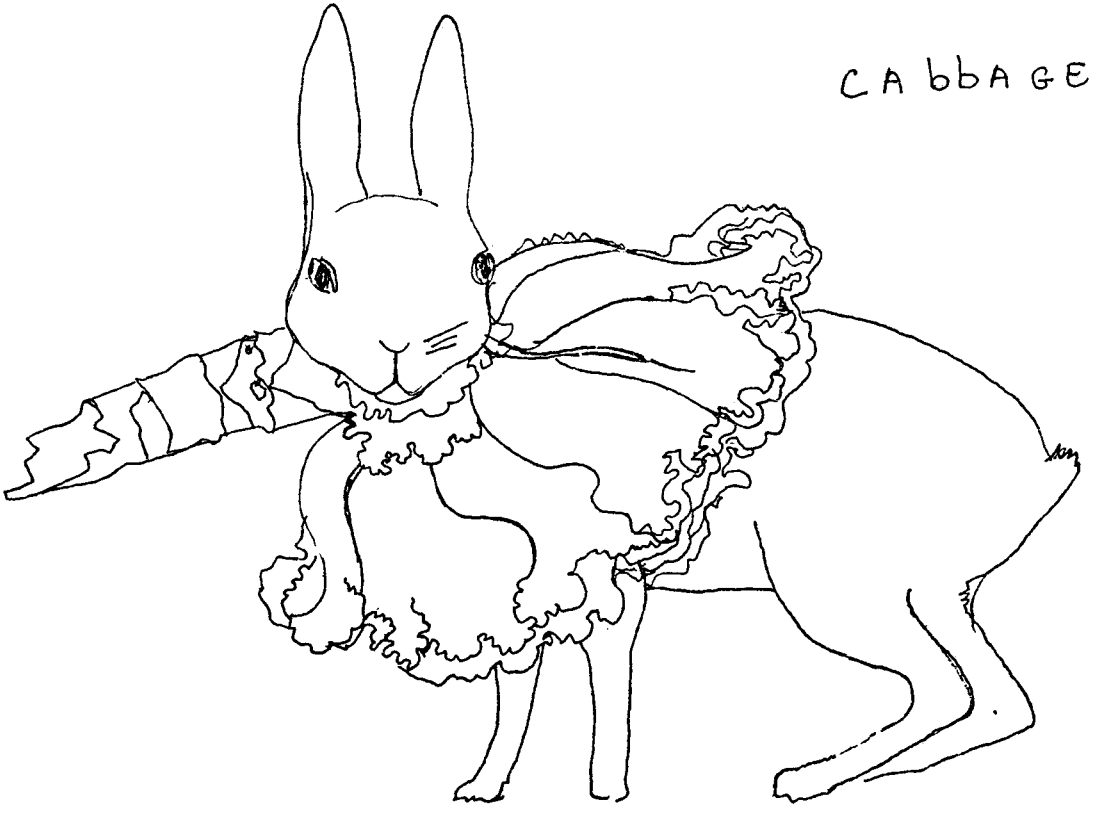

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John Vernon

The Audubon Bumper

Six days after I put the Audubon Bumper
on the truck I noticed the difference
and Annie sitting next to me
on the way to town to buy chickens
which we'd just run out of
noticed the difference too.
That famous light, the sun
shone down on our faces
there was rain only this morning
yesterday it snowed
last week the drought ended
and so on as far back
into the past as things go.
Soon the poison will reach the heart
the outside will rush in
the brief moments like faces
which show no emotion
will approach and empty themselves
one by one into the past.
But Annie said the ride is smooth
it must be the Audubon Bumper
and suddenly a thousand birds
swarmed up in a wave
pouring out of the Bumper
into the air around us.

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Charlie Vermont

Three Poems

I

look to the light

over there

here

and to the stranger

whoever comes
comes from
the other end of the sun

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Tunes: Placitas

for Billy Clements

chips wiz
off the axe

my eyes
to the top of the ridge
Indians
and I look for proof
scratching in the dirt for
an arrowhead

Billy, twists the cedar
free from its roots
dirt cascades into the arroyo

must have been hard to live off the land
I say, you know before they had
good axes
No, Billy says, 8 hours everyday
get a lot if you work hard everyday

We could have used the chain saw
and cut wood in five minutes
but Steve thinks Billy might wreck it
and suspects him of stealing his grass
and his old lady's pills when they were in LA

LSD is from another planet,
Billy says, soon
when the cops come after Leary
he disappears
they think he goes to another country
but really he goes to
another planet
I lived with the guy
I know where he's at

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III

she, criticizing John
for wanting her to mother him

taking my cues from the
governing hexagram Possession in Great Measure
commentary: "All things come to the man who is
modest and kind in a high position."
I said to her, you are
a mother, a sister,
a lover, a daughter
to all men
so you might as well
get used to it.

Later she said, I hope you stay around here,
I mean that you don't go back to Oregon or
wherever it is, besides there aren't any
poets here (the commune).
I said emphatically, Yes there are!
stretching a little.

What wisdom!! The TRAP:
I am thinking about it

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Joanne Kyger

He is in the mountains and in the streams, fields
Call upon the Lord Ganesha and he
will appear
immediately
as savior of grace and belief in the seen
observedly
his grace is of love and charm; as I have seen him
with his dainty eyelashes curled
as healer holding
salve, candy!

Now someone led me there; and someone still waits
that is
I have promised myself attention to them

preserving us: Hymn to the newly found
Breath!
The Spinal Cord; up which wanders
the track of energy
in which the whole earth is spotted and moves.

Time was moving out from under us
Nodding and standing still ola
in de Sun.
Birthless, Deathless
Oh Man, what a High I was having
Still
illuminating the world of name & form
The syllable GA represents mind and speech
What is beyond is the syllable NA and by
adoring him in the combination GANA you become
Brahman. This teaching is known as the secret
of VEDANTA

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Ponder over it and treasure it and all success
will come to you
becoming the friend of all

Soooo Serious
Soooo Gentle
Soooo full of wisdom
One nods out, gently faints upon the revelation
of the first thought or so
into this
on the printed bedspread I look out to sea
the wind whipping the waves

And he is all in the mountains too
illuminating their intellect.
For you who suffer he is Lord of Bliss of Self
For obstacles hinder us & need only be
turned aside
For they are illusion
Turn to him, Rodent Mounted
and you will surmount
your confusion for he grants
Quietude to be seen
throughout by the eye of the intelligent self.

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Joseph Bottone

Sky Light

I am in a temple or maybe it's a sweltering
summer camp lodge type, of a room.

Have too many cats...

On a stairway in an ancient municipal building, I disappeared today!

I forgot myself, and landed on wet pavements below

maple shade trees. Mysterious people wandered into shadow

and reappeared out of nowhere.

Even this is a lot better than getting trampled

upon by crowds around, shooting film for, "DOG SHIT PATCH".

Once, I sent an Indian drum to a friend of a friend of mine

from the foot of Sandia Mountains, it read:

6 Astronaut helmets.

2 naked wretching children.

1 universe bodies clapping
breath full of tears.

igloo.

1 telegram and a free breakfast
sponsored by Host of Seraphim.

About that time I was very paranoid.

Read all the Books of the Dead

I could get my hands on.

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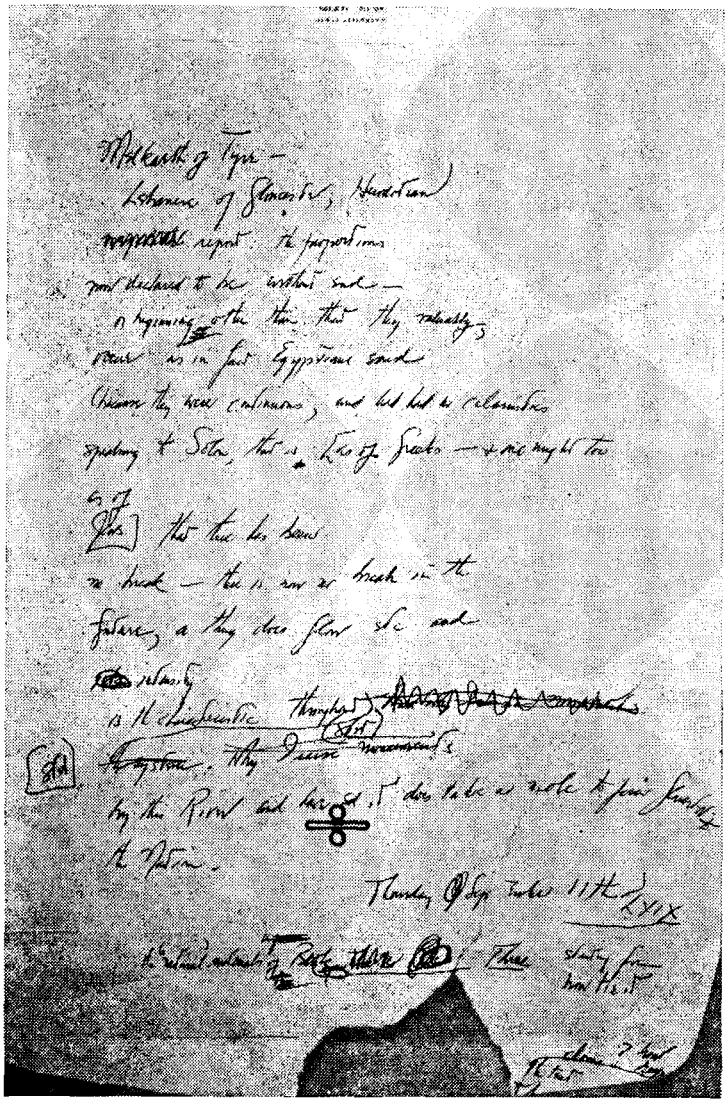

Charles Olson manuscript

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The Art of Poetry XII

Charles Olson

I arrived at Annisquam, nearby village to Gloucester, on Sunday, April 13th, about midday. I was the houseguest of the poet Gerrit Lansing whom I met a few years previous in New York at a party given by the poet Kenward Elmslie. Early in the evening Gerrit and

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I decided to set out for the Cut. It was 7:30 when we reached Charles Olson's flat to discover a note taped to the windowpane of the rear door, which read as follows: "Gerard: Best I can see is if another night will do me any good—(if you can afford to try me again). Gerrit—Gerard—Have been in bed with some strange malady solidly since Saturday. This is to get you an immediate response." I answered the note stating that I would try again the following night to catch him at home.

Monday at 5:45 P.M. Gerrit and I returned to the scene. The sun had just disappeared behind the village scattered among the hills across the Cut. I had my Uher 1000 Report Pilot strapped to my shoulder. Upon reaching the door Gerrit and I discovered still a second note (Olson's notorious for his door memos), which read: "I shall try to see if anything comes into my head— I actually mean if my head has any response itself, & either change this note, or call you & Gerrit."

Returning to Gerrit's house I immediately phoned Mr. Olson with whom I exchanged a few words and agreed that I should come by tomorrow at leisure without fixing a prescribed time.

The following day, Gerrit and I were met by Harvey Brown who, from nearby West Newbury (publisher of Niagara Frontier Books), joined us for lunch. Afterwards, Gerrit, Harvey, and myself decided to see if Charles Olson was up and around. I didn't have my machine with me, so was not expecting to begin an interview, having not planned to visit Mr. Olson at this time.

A chance meeting with Mr. Olson on Tuesday beside the wooden staircase leading to his second-story, floor-through apartment was a benediction. We had not met before, but upon seeing him, it was as if he had waited for me the entire afternoon to arrive. I found him facing the driveway and the Bay, enjoying the sunlight and the breath of brine wafted from the sea. His discourse was chiefly of the past; but he was not unmindful of current events, nor was he unaffected by the picturesque surroundings of his secluded abode. For Olson with seeing vision and acutest faculties and clearest utterance made a survey of his little seaside hamlet and its environs, interpreted the marvels all about him and shed the light of his presence upon the common things of sea and land always within sight. An hour with this gentleman of the Old School, in seclusion deepened and

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shadowed by hill, cliff, rock, tree, shrub, and vine, and sweetened by the mingling odors of marsh and upland, was the beginning of what turned into an all-night affair. Listening to him rap, long after the going down of the sun, and long after having run out of $\frac{1}{4}$*" tape, till into the morning hours, was an experience of deepest and most enchanting entertainment.*

Upon waking a few hours following the all-night conversation I found the flat empty. The cool blue sunlight of morning filtered through all the southern exposure windows of the flat. In the kitchen on the table cluttered with beer cans, cigarette and cigar butts, and unanswered correspondence, I found a new Olson poem in working draft scribbled on the back of an envelope, which read:

> *To build out of sound the walls of the city*
> *& display in one flower the wunderworld so that,*
> *by such means the unique stand forth*
> *clear itself shall be made known.*

I slipped his words like a thief into the breast pocket of my Black Dyed Caracul coat. My eyes then caught sight of a note addressed to me from Mr. Olson which read: "Forgive me if I sleep until I wake up (?)—Like, like, why now? When—call???Ever????Ever??? PS Buy more tapes."

OLSON

Get a free chair and sit down. Don't worry about anything. Especially this. We're living beings and forming a society; we're creating a total, social future. Don't worry about it. The kitchen's reasonably orderly. I crawled out of bed as sick as I was and threw a rug out the window.

INTERVIEWER

Now the first question I wanted to ask you. What fills your day?

OLSON

Nothing. But nothing, literally, except my friends.

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INTERVIEWER

These are very straight questions.

OLSON

Ah, that's what interviews are made of.

INTERVIEWER

Why have you chosen poetry as a medium of artistic creation?

OLSON

I think I made a hell of a mistake. That's the first confidence I have. The other is that—I didn't really have anything else to do. I mean I didn't even have enough imagination to think of something else. I was supposed to go to Holy Cross because I wanted to play baseball. I did, too. That's the only reason I wanted to go to Holy Cross. It had nothing to do with being a priest.

INTERVIEWER

Are you able to write poetry while remaining in the usual conditions of life—without renouncing or giving up anything?

OLSON

That's the trouble. That's what I've done. What I've caused and lost. That describes it perfectly. I've absolutely.

INTERVIEWER

Are the conditions of life at the beginning of a work...

OLSON

I'm afraid as well at the end. It's like being sunk in a cockpit. I read the most beautiful story about how Will Rogers and Wiley Post were lost; they stomped onto a lake about ten miles from Anchorage, Alaska, to ask an Indian if Anchorage was in that direction and when they took off, they plunged back into the lake. The poor boy was not near enough to rescue them, so he ran ten miles to Anchorage to get the people

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to come out. He said one of the men had a sort of a cloth on his eye and the guy then knew Post and Rogers were lost. Wiley Post put down on pontoons; so he must have come up off this fresh water lake and went poomp. Isn't that one of those great national treasures. I'll deal you cards, man. I'll make you a tarot.

INTERVIEWER

Does poetry constitute the aim of your existence?

OLSON

Of course I don't live for poetry; I live far more than anybody else does. And forever and why not. Because it is the only thing. But what do you do meanwhile? So what do you do with the rest of the time? That's all. I said I promised to *witness*. But I mean I can't always.

INTERVIEWER

Would you say that the more you understand what you are doing in your writing, the greater the results?

OLSON

Well, it's just one of those things that you're absolutely so bitterly uninterested in that you can't even live. Somehow it is so interesting that you can't imagine. It is nothing, but it breaks your heart. That's all. It doesn't mean a thing. Do you remember the eagle? Farmer Jones gets higher and higher and he is held in one of the eagle's claws and he says you wouldn't shit me would you? That's one of the greatest moments in American poetry. In fact, it is *the* great moment in American poetry. What a blessing we got.

INTERVIEWER

Does Ezra Pound's teaching bear any relevance to how your poems are formed on the page?

OLSON

My masters are pretty pertinent. Don't cheat your own

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balloon. I mean—literally—like a trip around the moon—the Jules Verne—I read that trip...it is so completely applicable today. They don't have any improvements yet.

INTERVIEWER

Do you write by hand or directly on the typewriter? Does either method indicate a specific way in which the poem falls on the page?

OLSON

Yeah. Robert Duncan is the first man to ask me the query. He discovered when he first came to see me that I wrote on the machine and never bothered to correct. There's the stuff. Give me half a bottle. Justice reigns.

INTERVIEWER

What about line units and indentation in your poems, particularly *The Maximus Poems?* Are they visual shapes before you set them down on paper via the typewriter?

OLSON

Wow, if I only knew I did it. It would be marvelous. Did I? Thank you. I read that piece of Jeremy Prynne's and he says everything right, accurately, I'm sitting here and thinking—isn't it terrible until somebody tells you. I didn't even know I did it though he says I did. I know I did what he said I did. Is that wonderful? Sad. So funny, because my vanity is so backfaced. I'm stuck with the other end. That's honest. That's honest.

INTERVIEWER

Would it be correct to say that your abbreviations derive from the device which Pound used in portions of the *Cantos*?

OLSON

I wish I had never done those damn things. I wish I had known enough to slip my head or something, because all that stuff isn't that interesting and it's the cheapest kind of non-at-

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tention to take a service mark for the whole thing. I think writing has gotten now to the point of AT&T or Western Union syntax.

INTERVIEWER

What is the distinction between your usage of the technique of quotation and that of Pound's?

OLSON

To tell you the truth, I think both Pound and Eliot were after something rather different than us who came a little later, like myself, hip hip hip. All that matters is that the thing be the thing of the thing—a cool thing which is like a river for the tiger of the river. To say it in language is like hard as hell. The greatest poetry profile that was made this side or the other side of the Atlantic Ocean is called the anacreontic award and I hereby now make it and it's pre-amanquiantic and it is absolutely way down below Atlantis and it has got no end, no end because it is like the stock of heaven and creation and it hasn't even been booed or had a crown yet, but it exists. And I know where it's playing—and I know where it is planted and I know where it is and we all do too, and we all know what we're talking about, because it is down on the plantation under the trunk of that large cypress tree in all that goo way down there in that rain swamp...

INTERVIEWER

Yes. Would you define the nature of influence?

OLSON

That we are influenced, right? Yeah. That sounds too aphoristic. At all costs. Clear the air. Clear the air. The American advantage. Clear the air. Clear our equity.

INTERVIEWER

What is the distinction between influence and discipleship?

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OLSON

I don't really think these questions are, if you'll excuse me, Gerard... I mean I *respect* you, but this is like when I was on Canadian television—one of those feature programs with a lady tiger from Tanganyika and buzz buzz and an American baseball, or something. The Canadian voice is still too rustic. So therefore only Englishmen can get announcers' jobs on Canadian broadcasting. This English guy who had the notes never knew who I was or what I was there for. I was there to represent poetry. Like as against hunting in Tanganyika and playing sacred games. That's very connective. Where did we go from? Was it an easy question I botched?

INTERVIEWER

It's an easy question. You have to take these questions seriously.

OLSON

Well, are *you* in school, am *I* in school that I'm getting easy questions? I mean like *Jeez*. I thought when I didn't feel well for two days at least Gerard will keep me interested. O.K., I'm very fresh. I just woke up.

INTERVIEWER

Do you enjoy telling young poets what they ought to do?

OLSON

Oh, Jesus, God, if I ever did, may the Lord of the whole of the seven saints of India and China Buddhaland, Ganges town and all takers this side of where the Tartars went—may they forgive me because like I am happy to have some friends here in the kitchen. I mean, wow, I've been very lucky, very lucky. I'm sorry, but I was born with a towel on my head.

INTERVIEWER

Let's say you were to meet a young poet whose work shows signs of influence from your own work...

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OLSON

It's instantly as immaculate or as impeccable as the existence of something new and boom, boom, wang, doong, zip, toodle, deedo, etc., etc. Could you give me a light. I ain't got no light. I have to answer that you don't help people. You don't help poor people in your poems. I'm afraid of teasing you, but don't worry. I been trying to help people all my life—that's been the trouble. My sense of responsibility. Otherwise I'm a free man, that's a big 18th century problem. I'm absolutely trying to climb up both walls at once. That beautiful Blake who is like four feathers of a raven caught down in a chasm of which we're just later birds, but like, oh, he's like a frozen four-winged raven, shrieking for the light—not frozen, but *ahead* of us. Like a box kite. We're all moving, movie, moving, move. Isn't it nice?

INTERVIEWER

What poet do you think you have had a lasting influence upon?

OLSON

Oh, wow, a lasting influence—my God. This indicates everything I've ever done that might possibly have had influence upon some of the men who I really feel connected to, and how! Wow. I mean if I could get drafts with reds, black and ribbons I'd be a collector!

INTERVIEWER

Don't you have the fear of being reduced to conformity by having too many other poets understand and imitate what you are doing?

OLSON

Oh, God, are you kidding? I mean, do you think I could be? Do you think I'm empty? I mean I got about five people who have given me evidence that they know what I said.

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INTERVIEWER

Five, who were the five?

OLSON

Well, that would be really to create quite a successful society. In fact, very successful; from my point of view with that five, wow! But no, that's literary history. And I'd have no interest in it whatsoever.

INTERVIEWER

Yes, but the people of *The Paris Review* want to know.

OLSON

Well, I know, but light a rock under *The Paris Review*. You are moved by the fact that another person sees what it is that you have done, which is like coming to the shore—like I fell off the big bow boat, and I carried the flag with me, and I swam ashore. I mean that kind of a marvelous result. It is that the other person somehow will say something relevant to what you have gotten yourself involved in. It is so important that it is like love, whatever that is. I mean if I can claim five persons who give me the sense that I'm where I was—then I'm still living. That's as big as I know it to be. And that's what's so great.

INTERVIEWER

Would you say that *The Black Mountain Review* helped to systematize your ideas about "projective verse?"

OLSON

I'd written it long before the review—four years before the review appeared.

INTERVIEWER

What are the basic differences betweeen "projective verse" and the "objectivist" movement established by the American poet Louis Zukofsky?

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OLSON

Do you want me to educate you. It is like I mentioned earlier about being on Toronto TV and the announcer comes on and says, "Mr. Olson, what do you think of imagism?" And I said, "What?" I mean that's the same sort of question as the indissoluble union of Mr. Pound and myself at the Pratagiano or something—of the skin of being which is as true in poets' loves for each other and in parenthood as it is in the whole forms of life—trees, ferns, and eventually fair rocks in the earth.

INTERVIEWER

How do you account for the change of trend in American poetry today from experiment and technique to subject matter? Do you think "projective verse" helped to bring this literary revolution about? Or is there little doubt that this type of poetry would have eventually been written without you?

OLSON

Same reason why this nation is going to hell right now—because it finally got caught up with itself. The tail got caught in the mouth, or something. I tried to answer this once. In Toronto a marvelous ex-wrestler poet named Harry Moscowitch, I think, used to be mad at me and after I finished reading, he said, "Why don't you write like William Butler Yeats?" There was this protest from the audience, like modern new gangsterism—William Butler Yeats? Well, I didn't know what to say. Moscowitch. Harry Moscowitch. I really didn't know. I mean I felt so peculiar—what could I do?

INTERVIEWER

Why is it that so many poets tend to shy away from writing about non-poetic things like the mass media or things that aren't considered poetic or proper poetic subjects?

OLSON

You know what the answer is—so simple—because they're

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not. They're social secondary matters which we have the government to take care of. I mean we have no interest in such servile mechanisms. That's why Mr. Foreman figures in the home. Our control of the planets as well as those machines is just vulgar matter. And in fact is based upon vulgar matter. It is simply an improvised condition of vulgar matter and will continue until somebody says this and really hears it because the thing is literally as old.

INTERVIEWER

Well, would you say that it is not poetic to glamorize things like mass media in poetry?

OLSON

That it is not poetic to glamorize? What's that connection to poetry? Mass media? I think it is a waste of energy—yeah, like a newspaper, because obviously in five years we will have won it all back. That is what I mean—that we *won't* want it all back. No, that's not fair, I guess.

INTERVIEWER

Why would we want it all back?

OLSON

No, I got you. I got you. I got you. I got you. I mean we want what's been suddenly disallowed.

INTERVIEWER

Were *The Maximus Poems* or *The Mayan Letters* written out of your emotions or do they represent a state of consciousness?

OLSON

I hope so. Altogether the question satisfied me completely.

INTERVIEWER

Have you ever found yourself struggling with existing ideas in a poem without being able to find a direction for new

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ideas?

OLSON

I don't, like I said in that *Maximus*, I didn't know there were any ideas. Ask me another question, immediately, on the same point.

INTERVIEWER

Do you find that one new word that comes to mind alters the whole picture, and you are obliged to rebuild the poem completely?

OLSON

I do think that's true absolutely—on the instant I begin a poem. But you know I am a little bit like Plutarch, or somebody. I write a poem simply to create a mode of a priesthood in a church forever, so that a poem for me is simply the first sound realized in the modality of being. If you want to talk about actuality, let's talk about actuality. And it falleth like a doom upon us all. But it falleth from above, and if that's not straight the whole thing is doodled and if straight then you can modality all you want. You can do anything, literally. Right? That I think is one of the exciting possibilities of the present. Modal throughout—that's what I love about today's kids. I like them because I think they're modaled throughout. I don't think their teachers are at all. I mean I'm almost like astringent here. I sit back in my lollipop Gloucester and don't do anything. A dirty lousy cop-out. I remember way back when I was young, ten years ago. I was lobbing 'em in. Now it's the Vietnam War. Dig? You follow me? It was marvelous. Playing catch, if I may say that—with a European audience as well. But I mean catch—we were playing catch. And he's a goddam nice fielder. All that Jewish Bronx shit. I don't mean because it's Jewish. It's this late Jewish, late east Bronx literature which to a geologist like me is just uninteresting. A geochronologist geologist. The world machines—that's what they got now. The world machines. When will government cease being a nuisance to everybody.

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INTERVIEWER

Do you find, when in the act of writing a poem, or re-working—

OLSON

Do I? Give me some more. Go ahead.

INTERVIEWER

Do you find in the act of writing a poem or re-working it afterwards that intensified observation brought about by self-remembering always has an emotional element?

OLSON

An emotional what?

INTERVIEWER

Emotional element.

OLSON

Yeah, I know. Here I defer to all those other American poets who for some reason I both envy and admire. I do. I mean, I never have rewritten almost anything... (*Long pause*) Where was I? I was going to create this diamond we were going to run. The suitor diamond, the sutra diamond. The sutra diamond for the superstar. Superstar. You know that's kind of an impressive thing. It's like those comics that are in now, that marvelous "Caper Comix" in the *Georgia Straight*. Those grotesque big-footed creatures. "Head Comics." God Jesus! You know this is just like "Head Comics." I was thinking reading the *Georgia Straight* the other night that I know this stuff like I know Jess Collins' revisions of Dick Tracy. You know that color thing? That's the incunabula of the twentieth century. It's absolutely monkish.

INTERVIEWER

I first saw Jess Collins' Sunday comic strip of Dick Tracy back in September of 1963. I do think, though, that Jess is in a very unfortunate position.

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OLSON

Why?

INTERVIEWER

Because the whole Pop Art thing is over and done with and Jess is going to be totally crushed...

OLSON

Maybe, but maybe Dick Tracy won't be. Like the heroes of the present will retreat to the imitation they are anyhow. And both the comic and the photographic and the antiquarian figures behind each one of those comics. What was your word just now? What was your verb just now?

INTERVIEWER

Jess is in a very bad position.

OLSON

No. That's not what you were saying. That's not the point. What was your verb, because I want to get that verb in because that's the whole thing. I have to. That's what's so nice. It's like that dipple-dopple bird in a box. You're the one that starts. Once it gets some water, it has to take water.

INTERVIEWER

Right, that's it.

OLSON

God, isn't it beautiful? I mean that's after Newton. I tell you the truth. If you do treat the sacred drugs sacredly you discover that they really yield what everybody else finds. God does, love does, life does, they do. The problem is not the quality.

INTERVIEWER

If you write down what you actually recall of some particular episode in your past, do you discover how little you remember?

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OLSON

No. On the contrary. I rush immediately, because I know about 99 percent.

INTERVIEWER

What are the techniques and attitudes that you require in order to create your poetry?

OLSON

Anything I can find. What do you mean? I mean—the yachts, piazza with the yachts' quarter flags flying and some chap in Tyre and some chap in the White House cometh. I have no idea, the green grass. I sound like Homer. I mean Winslow Homer. But I do sound like Homer, because really I'm sure he was talking about the same thing. Like a painting. Like a beautiful French painting—that thing that sold recently. You know, that great cat Monet. Come in *Paris Review*, come in. Paris; The God of Streets.

INTERVIEWER

Are objectivity and directness very significant principles for your poetry?

OLSON

I shouldn't think so. I would think quite the opposite—that I'm the most devious non-objective, coolest, plural subjective son-of-a-bitch this side of the wind. In fact, I can confess it all now.

INTERVIEWER

Could you explain—

OLSON

He's calling me back. Really I could have finished that in seven stanzas—not in seven stanzas but in seven choruses. We just have horses prancing, singing horses, walking horses. It's like the guy who photographed that marvelous, primary, primitive head. Did you see his photographs of an elephant

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walking in the field—you know the guy I mean? I'll have to look at it again.

INTERVIEWER

Could you explain the degrees of consciousness or unconsciousness with which you create a poem?

OLSON

Sounds like I'm in a hell of a trap, Gerard. I wouldn't even know. It's so radical that it's not even news.

INTERVIEWER

I was speaking with John Wieners on the phone the other day and he asked me to ask you, "To what dissent do you participate in guarding your forebears in literature?"

OLSON

How about that? I complained about this to—beautiful! It's said the right way. That's the first question. That's like the plum or the lemon or the orange on the vice machine. Oh Johnny, you've done it again. I agree, entirely. What do you want me to do? Talk like a slot machine? I can pay off punch punch punch. No kidding because that's the only answer to that kind of question. It's so sexual that it's—it's between you and me... oh Johnny, oh Johnny. Remember I told you about those slot machines. I play alone like in a mirror.

INTERVIEWER

What is your personal aim about what you want to attain?

OLSON

I got the question, give me the answer. Propose, propose the answer.

INTERVIEWER

I don't know. That's why I'm asking you the question. Why is it that a poem will produce different impressions on people of different levels?

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OLSON

Because of the vulgarity of all classes. I never thought I could be the ultimate. I didn't know there was a snob beyond snobs, right? It's new.

INTERVIEWER

Do you feel you will be able to write what you want to?

OLSON

What? I mean I'm already too old even to have arrived at that stage, and now I got to do something new. I mean something unheard of. I blew my time. I didn't earn it. I spent it, I blew it. So now I got to why are you asking me? I ain't got no time. What are you talking about? Read that question again.

INTERVIEWER

Do you feel that when the time comes to write what you want to, you must know what it is?

OLSON

Oh wow, I see, it's like school. Instruction. I think it's like instruction. It's in three parts—sort of—it's like the beginning, the middle, and the end. It's that discourse, syntax question, if you'll allow me to say so. It's a devil and you know it. I mean how many times has this happened. This is the first time in my kitchen that we've been able to sit here. What the hell are we getting out of this? We ought to treat this as in sort of a negative.

INTERVIEWER

How can a poet learn to *feel* more if he lives so much in his head?

OLSON

Oh man. That's been the bearing. I hope you're representing the devil's advocate. All these questions have all of the leading errors and none of the relevant. I mean if there's any-

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thing I did that's interesting then it ought to be interesting. Otherwise it's a waste of time. This question—questions generally speaking—is like the Canadian broadcaster asking in 1963 what do you think about imagism in writing in 1913, right? I just read about it the other night. I don't mean to jump from this but I mean we can go over this question like a million times. This is a kind of tomato catsup question, tomato juice, the U. S. Banana Company.

INTERVIEWER

How can a poet tell whether he has established something for himself that will take him further in his work?

OLSON

I don't know. Belief, conviction, experience. The decision, the suddenness—whatever it is, whatever the initial thing that is the exact opposite of the universal. The whole living thing of creation is that moment when you know what you feel or do.

INTERVIEWER

Is it true that there is a definite rule regarding the writing of poetry—that when a poet writes he doesn't have to disguise what he writes because he cannot avoid using the same language in which he has learned to speak?

OLSON

So true, so completely true and now so evident by either the law of persona or the law of psyche. You can read everybody. It's not even interesting to tell the truth because to some extent it's false. This socializes the practice.

INTERVIEWER

Is the poet's responsibility towards craftsmanship that of exercising taste and discretion in deciding on the final form of his poem?

OLSON

Wow, that's very aesthetic. Say that again.

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INTERVIEWER

Is the poet's responsibility towards craftsmanship that of exercising taste and discretion in deciding on the final form of his poem?

OLSON

Oh, utterly, in and throughout, like I once said in 1950. But let's be very insistent—I was very, very conservative from 1950 through seven different temporal changes and one major speech.

INTERVIEWER

Is distance a substitute for imaginative apprehension of a reality?

OLSON

My Gods, may I answer saying, "Look I'm not a shaman, but shamans are." That question is answered completely by the utter human ability to transport itself where it is wanted and needed and has to be—so the answer is that it's bullshit to use the word "distance" as opposed to what I meant in *The Distances*, which is what "distance" always has meant to anyone who looks beyond the horizon. Well, I didn't mean to sound like Eugene O'Neill...

Would you call Mrs. Tobin. I tried to. I forgot to get the liquor. 283 420, I think it is, and get her to send over the usual.

INTERVIEWER

We should read the telephone directory—you could read it.

OLSON

No, no, no. I got a friend who does that. Let's finish off where we were. Because otherwise this diamond is going to break. Do you understand who the diamond is? Chin-chin. Some ancient unburied or unrecovered Tibetan low-mountain style we get from Upsbridge—where Frank O'Hara and I were born. Let's go on the road—like they say. The other night I saw a picture of Dylan looking absolutely la-da-da.

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Oh, magnificent—back when Poland was Poland. What's his new recording?

INTERVIEWER

Nashville Skyline.

OLSON

That's right. That's the one. Another lovely Hasidim, laughing Jew. He is just beautiful. It has nothing to do with Woody or any of that shit. He is just an absolutely delicate thing. That incredible whatever it is—not the power of the benediction of God, but the fortune of the sidereal realm that the Jews come out with—the crescent of this question—if there is such a question.

INTERVIEWER

Did you write *The Maximus Poems* independently of any influence?

OLSON

Yes. I sure did. Like that's an *answer* to that question. But how can I prove it. I don't know. I mean I Tyre of Gloucester. I don't know how much *Maximus* is, of course, a verb.

INTERVIEWER

The divine inspiration of poetry? I would have expected you to say Pound or Williams because everything is structure.

OLSON

Well, no. It is not structure. That's ignorance, if you'll excuse me. Ignorance of your own, baby, time. Because I'm one of the clichés that has grown up. In fact, it was created to put me out of business, as well as my friend, the lovely Dr. Williams, as well as Mr. Pound; because there is a goddamn funny thing going on in this century though I certainly don't believe in conspiracy. I mean the amount of connection that any one of those three people mentioned would feel to the other is highly questionable...

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INTERVIEWER

Would you have written *The Maximus Poems* as you did without knowing Pound's or Williams' works?

OLSON

That's like asking me how I could have written without having read. You read the nearest at hand.

INTERVIEWER

Is there any similarity between the views of Pound on history and your own?

OLSON

None whatsoever. Ezra's are optative; mine are decisive. I love Ezra for all the boxes he has kept. He really is a canto-maker. I couldn't write a canto if I sat down and deliberately tried. My interest is not in cantos. It's in another condition of song, which is connected to mode and has therefore to do with absolute actuality. It's so completely temporal.

INTERVIEWER

Would you say that your inclusion of the subject of economics in *The Maximus Poems* is a revival of that very same effort found in the *Cantos*?

OLSON

Mr. Pound, I think, comes of a family which had means enough to take Ezra across the Atlantic. So he had the advantage of a European situation. I was born in south Worcester. That's a very important thing. I finally got pissed off at Ezra's pissing on Dr. Williams because one portion of Williams was Jewish—about 1/16, 1/18, 1/9, 1/8, 1/4, 1/7, 1/17...

INTERVIEWER

Would you make a specific distinction between poets whom you could imitate and poets from whom one could learn?

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OLSON

Oh boy, I mean *learn* anything. Like my palm I've forgotten what it sounded like. Wow! I mean like just flash me again, what was that signal?

INTERVIEWER

Would you make a specific distinction...

OLSON

Yeah, Yeah. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER

...between poets whom you yourself...

OLSON

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER

...or anyone could imitate and poets from whom one could learn?

OLSON

That's not the whole question. You've gone on.

INTERVIEWER

No, no, I haven't.

OLSON

Say that question you asked me just now again.

INTERVIEWER

Would you make a specific distinction between poets whom you yourself or anyone could imitate and poets from whom one could learn?

OLSON

Is that what you said? That's too much. That's damn interesting. You've got your answer, you *had* your answer.

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Father Pound, that was beautiful, father of me. That's too much. Beautiful. That's way out.

INTERVIEWER

Is one of the ways by which contemporary poetry has tried to escape the rhetorical, the abstract, the moralizing—is it to concentrate its attention upon trivial or accidental or commonplace objects?

OLSON

I think you're an agent of a foreign power. A series of questions even the FBI... never in all my life in court or in secret have I known such questions! Who wrote this, did you? If so, leave my house! If not, then please, own up the ownership. Mr. Malanga, Signor Malanga, I will expose you to your nation.

INTERVIEWER

I will expose myself. Anyway, no one escapes the media, least of all you.

OLSON

I will send you back to Malaga to raise more raisins. The raisins are good. Grapes are good. Those are dry questions. I would like you to repeat that raisin of a question once more so that the whole world via *The Paris Review*—which is the Gorgon or Medusa instead of the present—can be spoken to through a comic mask.

INTERVIEWER

I'll try another. Do you find it useful to collect opinions of friends about your work? Do you feel this often helps in discovering points to improve your work that you would normally not discover on your own?

OLSON

You mean my friends? It's not enough, they don't say enough. Did you? Did you? I mean like Emperor Jones—not

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only LeRoi, but Mr. O'Neill's—walking through the forest—scared to death.

INTERVIEWER

What constitutes a school of poetry?

OLSON

Total change, like the man said; one doesn't look like boopeedeboop—of course. Carry on, destroy film, take another giant step backwards. Malaga. Take one step backwards. Now, ask me some decent questions.

INTERVIEWER

Is the function of a literary—

OLSON

That sounds dirty as hell. Maybe we can take that to the Supreme Court. Yeah, I heard you. Continue without repeating it.

INTERVIEWER

... is the function of a...

OLSON

He's already conditioned. It's like a reflex. Atlantis will arise again. Go ahead. God's with this boy.

INTERVIEWER

Is the function of a literary movement primarily to secure publication of the poets connected with that movement or doesn't a literary movement or school present a different function or advantage?

OLSON

That's a dumb sort of block historical question, if I may say so, and typical sort of a Columbia twentieth-century question.

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INTERVIEWER

A school is a place where one can learn something. Can a school lose by giving away its knowledge?

OLSON

Oh boy, that's beautiful. That's a lovely question. It's really such a lovely question. Jesus God. I see it. Right through the solar plexus as the pantheon of Black Mountain pharaoh of the exile... We all went on to the other fields, other Bull Runs. It's a marvelous question, though.

INTERVIEWER

Would you say Black Mountain College's sole existence depended on the part of those artists who took part in the building of it?

OLSON

Oh no. I think, in fact, the man who built it wonderfully enough was not an artist at all, but a man from Charleston—a rare bird.

INTERVIEWER

Is a school of poetry necessary in order to gain attention for a group of poets' work or is it a handicap?

OLSON

I don't think it's relevant.

INTERVIEWER

I'm talking about schools of poetry in terms of such as the so-called New York School of Poetry, if you'll pardon the expression.

OLSON

All right, so name them. Poets have no reason to be in the marvelous ITT thing or Inter-World aviation.

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INTERVIEWER

Do you see the prospect of a definitive practical guide in the form of an anthology of the Black Mountain School of Poets?

OLSON

Well, I certainly don't. If the fuckers don't get along down the trail I'll kick their fucking asses for them. I'm an old trail man from the woods and if the goddamn stuff doesn't come down the trail to my satisfaction, until I'm beaten, I'm still boss.

INTERVIEWER

Would you say that your life as a by-product is existing without you?

OLSON

Oh, that's mad!!! Having rolled in all the way from—boom, boom! We're just back to the whole landing on the barren coast of North America. Fantastic. I think for the audience of Europe. This is one of them bawdy questions that don't come off anymore—really bawdy question like that. But listen to this, man, what's that story when the joke is at the end—what do you call that—so boom! The ending. Ok? I'm afraid you've got a problem. A very normal problem. And you will take care of it. I hope. At one point much earlier in this tape, something sounded good enough, sounded like Hawaiian—can't make anything out of *this* stuff. It's only shredded wheat.

INTERVIEWER

What about our country?

OLSON

There is a grace of life which is still yours, my dear Europe. Oh! As against this abusive, vulgar, cruel, remorseless and youthless country, the United States of America. May she perish in these five years, simply not because of any wish—any radical wish at all, but that she would get out of our way,

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and leave us alone. And leave things alone which she has harmed and harmed and harmed. And for what? For nothing. For something which she herself no longer values and will buy her nothing. We will all be in the same boat with all the leaks of this filthy system which has purchased all of our lives at its cost. Not really, thank God. God damn her soul, because she didn't have enough strength to win us. But my God, when I think of two centuries which did play her game, whistle to her tune.

INTERVIEWER

There was no skipper.

OLSON

I don't have a skipper. I'm no skipper either. This country has been unconscious, and it's got to awake and that's my belief. And that's why I've spent so much time just painting her nails and sails or something. I mean—the piper of a sleeping nation. It's so stupid. It's awake all the time and it's never awake for a minute. It's the deadest sleep that ever was, to talk like Blake. I don't think Blake could have imagined it.

INTERVIEWER

What do you spend your money on?

OLSON

Oh, wow. Jesus, like any poor citizen; in fact, pay my bills. Go out and tear the town apart. I mean if we can't eat, let's fuck the place tonight—dump her in the ocean. Let's. We deserve something; this is crazy.

—GERARD MALANGA

(The Editors wish to express their thanks to Harvey Brown for his great assistance in preparing the interview.)

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Charles Olson

The Island, the River, the shore,
the Stage Heads, the land, itself,
isolated, encased on three sides by
the sea and water
on the 4th side, Eastern Point an arm
such as Enyalion's to protect
the body from the onslaught of
too much and give Gloucester
occasion, give her Champlain's channel
in and out (as her river
refluxes), a body of land, hard on granite yet
arched by such skies favored by such sea and
sweetened in the air so briar-roses grow
right on her rock and at Brace's Cove kelp
redolents the air, jumps the condition and strain locus
falls or emerges as the rain on her or the sun

Saturday May 24th
'LXIX

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Notes on Contributors

Joseph Bottone has published in *The World* and edited an anthology, *Oriental Blue Street*.

Michael Brownstein's most recent books are *Highway to the Sky* (Columbia University Press, 1969) and *3 American Tantrums* (Angel Hair Books, 1970).

Tom Clark's poem "A Sailor's Life" is from a sequence called *Green* that will be published by Black Sparrow Press.

Robert Creeley teaches at the State University of New York at Buffalo. His latest book is *Pieces* (Scribners).

Marc Devade's paintings were recently shown in Paris at the Galerie le Haut Pavé.

Tom Disch is working on a historical novel called *Jason: An Epic*.

Kenward Elmslie is the author of *Album* (Kulchur Press), a book of poems, song lyrics, fictions and short plays. In 1968, Black Sparrow Press published *The Champ*, a long poem, and they will soon publish a collection of poems, *Circus Nerves*.

Dick Gallup's collection of poems, *Where I Hang My Hat*, will be published by Harper & Row this fall.

Joanne Kyger is the author of *The Tapestry and the Web*.

Claude Lalanne's work is shown at the Iolas Galleries.

Gerard Malanga's forthcoming books are *Italian Photobiography/diary poems* (Trigram Press) and *Gerard Malanga: A Poet's Self-Portrait* (März Verlag, Germany).

Frank O'Hara's poems in this issue will appear in a volume of his collected poems edited by Donald Allen.

René Ricard's poems have appeared in *Angel Hair*, *Aspen*, and *The World*.

James Salter's story, "Am Strande von Tanger," is in the current O. Henry collection. He wrote the film *Downhill Racer*, and will be directing a film of his own, *To Warsaw*, this fall.

Aram Saroyan's books include *In*, *Sled Hill Voices*, *Aram Saroyan*, *Pages*, *Cloth*, and *Poems (1962–1968)*.

Peter Schjeldahl writes for *The New York Times*, and is the author of *White Country* (Corinth), a collection of poems.

Paul Spike won last year's Paris Review Humor Prize. A book, *Bad News*, will be published by Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Richard Stern's novella in this issue is part of his sixth book of fiction, *1968*. His other books include *Stitch*, *Golk*, *In Any Case*, and *Teeth, Dying and Other Matters*.

Charlie Vermont lives in Eugene, Oregon.

John Vernon's poems have appeared in *The New American Review* and *Chicago Review*.

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